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For

THE PRINCESSE DE MONTGLYON. THE AUTHOR'S FAVORITE PHOTOGRAPH OF HERSELF.

The Last of a Race

By

DE MERCY ARGENTEAU,
PRINCESSE DE MONTGLYON

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THE LAST OF A RACE
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Dedicated
with deep affection and admiration
to
J. H. WERNE
who willed and so won.
Also to the affectionate remembrance
of
ETAH

DE MERCY ARGENTEAU.

Foreword

I HAD not intended these lines to be published until after the death of all those principally concerned, or named throughout them. However, circumstances have forced my will and they will find a place in the reading world before it was contemplated that they should do so. I am sorry for whatever remembrances are bitter, hurtful, and reopen partly healed wounds. I wish to say that my feelings to-day are without sting, reproach or bitterness. Only peace and good feeling are in my heart towards any. I have too much, myself, to account for to the One Above, at this sunset of my life, not to bear ever present in my heart and mind towards others and myself the words of Our Lord:

Que celui d'entre vous qui est sans péchés
lui jette
la première Pierre.

THE AUTHOR.

I acknowledge here with deepest gratitude and affection the generous labour put into this book by my dear friend, Ida Zeitlin.

DE MERCY ARGENTEAU.

Contents

One: LE PRINTEMPS

CHAPTER

I *Only a Girl*, 17
II *Empire—My Mother's Mission*, 29
III *Girlhood*, 34
IV *Marriage*, 47

Two: L'ÉTÉ

V *My Wedding Journey*, 63
VI *"Mon Petit Mari,"* 80
VII *My Son's Birth—Social Activities*, 89
VIII *Gambling*, 100
IX *Pilgrimage*, 116
X *The Desert*, 127
XI *The Holy Land*, 139
XII *Homeward*, 150
XIII *I Leave My Husband*, 160
XIV *My Father Dies*, 173
XV *Disillusion*, 185

Three: L'AUTOMNE

XVI *In Quest of Knowledge*, 199
XVII *Wrangles*, 212
XVIII *Drugs*, 221
XIX *I Cure Myself*, 236
XX *Spain—My Mother's Return*, 245

CHAPTER

XXI *Wanderings and Winnings*, 256

XXII *My Boy*, 270

FOUR: L'HIVER

XXIII *My Mission*, 289

XXIV *Conclusion*, 309

Illustrations

The Princesse de Montglyon . . . . . *Frontispiece*

La Marquise de Fontenay, the author's great grandmother 20

Florimond Claude, Comte de Mercy Argenteau, Ambassador from Austria to the Court of France 21

Fête given by Comte de Mercy Argenteau on the occasion of the marriage of Marie Antoinette and the Dauphin . 21

Baddy and her young charge 24

Mademoiselle Mimi 25

The author's mother at the time of her intimacy with Napoleon III 40

The Calèche in which the author's mother was accustomed to take her afternoon drive 41

The author at thirteen 41

The author and her mother at Cowes about her début . . 64

The author immediately after her marriage 65

Her Serene Highness, Princess Pauline Metternich . . 72

The author on her honeymoon 73

The author in fancy dress costume 96

The author on the Prince of Wales's yacht at Cowes . . 97

The author and her husband, with her uncle, Prince de Chimay, on her right 112

At Beauchamp, the country seat of the Prince de Chimay, baby Antoine sees his mother off for a drive, with his father, uncle and cousin 112

Château d'Avaray 113

Count Fitz James during his military service in Africa, 1876 136

The author posed in classical garb, in conformance with the social fad of the moment 137

The author at about the time of her divorce . . . 168

The author in a characteristic costume of the period . . 169
The author's father 176
A corner in the bedroom of the author's father . . . 177
The author and her son, Antoine 216
The Château d'Argenteau 217
Argenteau from the bridge over the Meuse 217
The author at the time of her subjection to drugs . . 240
One of the drawing rooms at Argenteau 241
The little pony, Bobby, that the Princesse drove herself at Argenteau, and two of the many dogs that she bred . 241
The chapel at Argenteau where the author's parents are buried 256
Exterior of the chapel at Argenteau 256
The author's mother in court dress 257
The author and her son during their travels in Holland . 272
The author crossing from Calais to Dover to attend the Newcastle dog show 272
Antoine, Marquis d'Avaray, at the time when he joined his mother at Argenteau 273
Etah 304
The author's half-brother gives Onyx a lift 305

One: LE PRINTEMPS

THE LAST OF A RACE

One: LE PRINTEMPS

CHAPTER I

Only a Girl

THE historical old castle of Argenteau was all aquiver with excitement, and every heart beat high with hope on the dawn of the 18th of July, 1862. Because they had disregarded the biological fact that the first child is quite as often a girl as a boy, their joy was turned to mourning and all the happy preparations for festivity were laid aside, for the news came forth that the expected heir was "only a girl" and a most unwelcome one. Probably the one consoling thought in the minds and hearts of all was that it was perhaps only a *partie rémise* and that a boy would one day embody the hopes frustrated for the moment; but that day was never to be for my mother, having fulfilled her duty to the family, brought forth an heir and suffered agonies thereby, underwent an operation that blighted forever the hope of a son, and a girl remained to carry to the end of her life the proud burden of being the head of the family and the last one of a name which covers ten centuries of illustrious warriors, crusaders and diplomats.

The name of Argenteau is mentioned in the year 1070, in a charter by which the king of the Romans, Henri IV, confirms to the church of Liège the possession of its domains, enumerating them and continuing permission to hold garrisons in the castle of Argenteau under the same conditions as those previously granted by the Emperor Henri III. The seigneurs d'Argenteau and Hermalle took the title of Count, owning vast estates, having their own vassals, marching in war at the head of their own troops under their own colours and banners, independent save for allegiance to the Roman Empire. During the eleventh century the castle was known as Argentael (literally, silver coin) so evidently, even at that early date, the house was powerful enough to coin its own money.

In 1415 Guillaume I made his own gold ducats bearing the arms of Argenteau and the title of Prince of Montglyon or Monteleonii, as originally spelled. On November 4th, 1415, a document was signed, cementing the union between the Brabancons and Limbourgeois, which was confirmed on November 24th, 1417, in which Guillaume d'Argenteau is termed "Prince de Montglyon" and called "My Cousin." This document was in the archives of Liège before they were destroyed, as well as in the archives of the family.

It was in the seventeenth century that the names of de Mercy and Argenteau were joined when Florimond Claude, Maréchal de Mercy, adopted as his son and heir Charles Antoine Ignace Augustin d'Argenteau, whom he liked and whose military talents were well known to him, with the injunction to join the names and arms of Mercy and Argenteau.

My mother's father was Alphonse, Prince de Caraman

Chimay. His wife, Rosalie de Caraman, was his first cousin. His mother was the celebrated beauty and heroine of the French Revolution who saved many from prison and the guillotine and was called by the populace who loved her *Notre Dame de Thermidor.* She was born Thérèsia, Countess de Cabarrus, of Spain, and was married quite young to the Marquis de Fontenay, guillotined during the first outrages of the *Regne de la Terreur* as a detested aristocrat. When the *sans culottes* reigned supreme she herself was thrown into a cell with Hortense de Beauharnais, who later became the wife of Napoleon I and Empress of France.

The Marquise de Fontenay was taken out of prison in the depth of the night, to be judged by the *Tribunal Revolutionaire.* Being an aristocrat, she was adjudged guilty after a summary examination, and sentenced to be executed at dawn. As she was being taken to the wagon which was to carry her to the place of execution, one of her judges, Citoyen Tallien, accosted her: "Citoyenne, veux-tu m'épouser?" A moment's reflection brought her to the conclusion that, her head saved, her further course of action might be left to the future. She accepted, and the aristocrat became Citoyenne Tallien, *Notre Dame de Thermidor.*

Madame Tallien was very beautiful, vivid, witty and inexpressibly extravagant in her dress and habits and manner of speech. She exerted a considerable influence over a large and devoted following, even her affected speech becoming a fad of the day and slavishly imitated. She enjoyed her power during the Revolution and in 1802 divorced Tallien and returned to the sphere of her birth and training, marrying in 1805 the Count de Caraman, Prince de Chimay, who was the father of my

grandfather and brother to the Duc de Caraman, the father of my grandmother.

My father's grandfather was Charles Marie d'Argenteau d'Ochain who married Thérèse, Princesse Paar, in 1804. They had several children of whom Charles, the eldest, was my grandfather. He married Adelaide van Brienen. Their first child was my father, Eugène, who married Princess Louise de Caraman Chimay, of whom I am the only child.

The feeling of disappointment at my sex grew no less as time went on. If anything, it was intensified. But there was a difference in the attitude of my parents which I began to feel, if not to understand, while I was still very young. To my father my sex was a cause for regret,—keen, ever-present, it is true, but reasonable; to my mother, who was both cleverer and more ambitious, it was a cause for rage which developed into a smouldering resentment against me that died only with her. And so, inevitably, as I see now, my own position and viewpoint began to be shaped. These things I took for granted: that parents were all-powerful gods issuing edicts (that these edicts might be set aside or even questioned would have occurred to me as easily as it would occur to me now to put my hand into a blazing fire and hold it there); that formal courtesy to one another and harshness or perfunctory kindness to me were right and natural; that my mother might whisper endearing words into her dog's ear, but that her attentions to me would be limited to an impatient: "Oh, do get out of my way!" or "What a fright the child is!" or a stinging slap at whatever childish offence I may have committed (how I grew to dread the sharp rings with which her hands were covered!); that my

father might rejoice my heart with a careless caress if he were in the humour but that it would never do to force myself on his notice. Toward my mother I never felt the smallest impulse of love—how could I?—only fear and a deep and sincere admiration of her beauty. My father I worshipped devotedly, if for the most part at a distance. I can recall no feeling of resentment toward either of them. How bear resentment when there was no realisation of the condition to be resented! The laws of the Persians were no more definitely fixed than was my acceptance of this state of things. I did not know and could not imagine the possibility of a different one.

Yet it must have been then that the canker was sown which was to eat so deeply into the lives not only of my parents and myself but of my husband and son. Affection was discouraged, any inclination toward softness immediately uprooted; sentiment was above all things abhorrent. I am sure that if I could go to my mother now and ask her as one reasonable being of another: "Why? Why? Why the constant severity? The cruelty even? The absence of love expressed or unexpressed?" she would answer with a shrug: "What need was there for love? For us submission and obedience were enough. For the rest, who knows what folly you might have committed, what nobody you might have run off with in the name of love if you had not been well hardened against it!" And so I learned independence, to cling to no one, to make my own decisions and take the consequences, to fight my own battles shrewdly but—thanks to Baddy, my nurse—fairly, to ask neither understanding nor quarter. And if I learned, too, imperiousness and arrogance, egotism and

the will to take my way at whatever cost, I have suffered for these as well, though not alone. The weevil in the boll ruins the cotton and the effects are felt not only by the cotton grower but by the whole world. I seek to disclaim no share of my own responsibility but, with the forging of no single link to hold my restless heart, much that followed was inevitable.

The figure that dominates those early days, the one person toward whom I felt a natural flow of affection, was Bartlett, my English nurse, the beloved Baddy of my babyhood. She was my refuge, my safe retreat. Child though I was, I realised that she loved me and meant well by me and that when she meted out punishment it was punishment deserved.

She was a pillar of truth and justice, unflinching in both, and so deeply did she impress upon my child mind the sanctity of "honour" that it became to me the standard to live and die for. Very well did I understand its application. For example, I learned by some chance or mischance that the yolk of egg and sugar stirred together made a most delicious combination—the very sight of it nauseates me now! The first time the yellow streak around my mouth betrayed me and got for me only a light punishment, with the admonition not to yield again to the great temptation. But in spite of the fact that I knew I should have to report the offence myself, on every possible occasion I stole the ingredients, made and ate the delightful repast and carefully wiped my mouth. Then my sense of honour again coming to the fore, I would go to Baddy, pull up my little petticoats and lay myself across her knee, faltering: "I did it again," and await the unfailing spanking. Be sure I got it in ample measure, however more it hurt

her to administer than me to receive it, as she assured me. But that was her point of view. I well knew mine.

Poor Baddy! Between her duty to my parents and her affection for me, she must have found herself in a dilemma more than once. My meals were served in the nursery and no effort was made to tempt my palate. The menus were monotonously similar and every day I knew what I should eat before it came to the table. On Saturday there was always boiled beef, not the steaming, tender beef that my parents ate but that from which I know not how many gallons of soup had been strained. Try as I might, I had no success with it. The more I chewed the fuller grew my mouth of tough strings of food. Swallow it I could not. One day as I laid more than the usual number of cords side by side on my plate, "What's wrong?" asked Baddy. "Why don't you eat your meat?"

"But I can't, Baddy," I wailed; "it won't go down." Recognising the force of my argument, she ordered beefsteak for me the following Saturday.

Every two or three months my father went over the bills and he must have puzzled a minute or two over the singular item: "Beefsteak for Mimi" before he sent for Baddy to explain it.

"The child cannot chew the beef, sir. It's too tough and dry. She cannot swallow, and she goes hungry."

My father frowned. Was this revolt? "She *shall* chew the beef!" And boiled beef was forthwith ordered served to me every day at every meal until I had learned to swallow it. There was no appeal. Each day the abominable stuff appeared before me and each day I struggled manfully to vanquish it. When the decisive

victory was reported to my father I was rewarded. The boiled beef was no longer served daily and it was only on Saturdays thereafter that I met the enemy.

Another vivid memory of my childhood recalls one of Baddy's rare moods of tenderness. I was told one day that I was to go for a drive in the *calèche* with my mother—in the *calèche* with its four prancing horses and beautiful postilions, O supreme joy! For once to primp and have my hair curled was a delight. I was going in the *calèche.*

A pale mauve poplin dress was adjusted, a new hat with corn flowers put on at the right angle, and thus arrayed in my best garments, I awaited my mother's pleasure. When she came down, a vision in lace and soft yellow silks, she looked at me in my new costume and then, with an expression of the greatest distaste, passed on slowly, saying: "Run upstairs, child; I could not think of having such a fright with me in the *calèche.*"

Baddy was exceptionally kind to me and, once my fineries were removed that as a rule I hated to put on, I began to wonder. Looking at what the mirror reflected, I easily understood my mother's verdict, for this is what it told me. A very high forehead, golden-reddish hair drawn back as straight and tight as could be, though a big bunch of curls falling to the waist was a compensation, two deep Irish blue eyes full of a yearning desire to know but, large as they were, empty and void of knowledge; black eyelashes, but no eyebrows for I had cut these off so that they should grow thicker, as I had been told they would; a straight nose, large and not yet chiselled into its definite shape; a mouth good in its lines, a rather short chin and big ears. I was

BADDY AND HER YOUNG CHARGE.

MADEMOISELLE MIMI.

tall for my age and felt very uncomfortable in my short skirts with long legs and large feet encased in white stockings and the extremely square-toed shoes made especially as a corrective to my vanity. This was the picture the mirror reported of the sorry-looking daughter of a beautiful mother.

It was then that I began to observe and store up for future use the ways of the pretty ladies I saw, chief of whom was of course my mother. The mirror was my constant mentor and guide until one day I found each looking-glass in the nursery, schoolroom and playroom allotted to me covered with paper, at my mother's order. So there was a full stop to these attempts on myself, but I watched on just the same and kept in my memory what I did see.

No amount of parental tyranny or discipline availed to break my spirit. I rebounded after each blow and managed to get into as much mischief as any spoilt child of them all. Always I did these things deliberately, knowing what the unpleasant aftermath would be but accepting it stoically for the sake of the adventure. I well remember the day when I retaliated for the indignity of having my feet washed before the usual bath time by washing the feet of my mother's canary and incidentally strangling the bird in my loving clutch. I wept piteously when I discovered that tragedy for I was always passionately fond of animals. Which did not prevent me from yielding to an insane fit of jealousy one day and hurling my mother's beloved Skye terrier with all my force from the top of the staircase to the bottom. The thrashing I had for that day's work was well deserved.

One of my favourite games was to play circus, which consisted in stealing a pair of my mother's high-heeled

slippers by which I was transformed into a beautiful equestrienne, and jumping up and down on my bed, the object of the game being to see how deeply I could dent the counterpane. Though this was not strictly within the law, Baddy allowed me to gallop in peace. But my mother's maid, a smug and virtuous person, carried her the news of my performances with disastrous results. This must be stopped. I knew that Clothilde liked pretty things and, like all Catholic children, I had a great many lovely strings of prayer beads, jade and amethyst and onyx. When I next felt a craving to play circus I approached Clothilde with one of these. "Here are some beads, Clothilde," I said. "Now don't look for a while." It worked well. Clothilde was blind and I jumped my horse unmolested.

One of my most memorable adventures occurred during a walk that I took with my grandfather. We arrived at the Tuileries where a captive balloon waited for passengers before starting its trip. I begged to be allowed to go up but grandfather would not be persuaded. However, he turned his back to greet some old fogy friend one moment before the balloon cast off and without an instant's hesitation I jumped in. Grandfather's pleasant conversation was interrupted less pleasantly by an excited shout from over his head: "Bon papa! Bon papa! Look at me! I am in the balloon!" I was wild with delight which not even the accidental breaking of the rope that bound the balloon to the earth could quench. It only excited me the more. For a glorious hour and a half we drifted until we landed at Suresnes where I found grandfather waiting for me. He did not reproach me. That was not his way. But because he felt his responsibility keenly he told my

mother of Mimi's disobedience and its direful consequences, sparing neither himself nor me. For this adventure my poor dear *bon papa* was punished as grievously as I. I was never permitted to go walking with him again.

Not long after, an incredible announcement was made to me. I was to be taken to Paris by my father and mother—both!—to visit a circus. My delight knew no bounds. To be taken by either of my parents anywhere was unusual. But to go with both! And to a circus! It was an event beside which the downfall of kingdoms was nothing.

And so we went to Paris. But when we arrived there was no circus. After luncheon my parents suddenly remembered that the circus had been last week. And the conviction flashed through my mind that they had known all along. Of course! It was clear to me in a moment. My father had spoken of something he would attend to in the afternoon and when I had asked, "Isn't papa going with us to the circus?" my mother had replied: "Oh, yes, he will join us later." I was disappointed, bitterly, but made no remonstrance, knowing its uselessness.

When we reached home, I ran through the house looking for Baddy. "Baddy!" I called, "Baddy! There was no circus!" But there was no Baddy either.

"She has gone away," said the housekeeper.

"Where?" She shrugged her shoulders. I ran to my mother.

"Where is Baddy?"

"She has gone away."

"When will she come back?"

"She will not come back. You were growing too fond

of her. You are a big girl now—not a baby any longer. You must have a governess. You will not see Baddy any more."

For the first time in my life complete fury took possession of me. I stamped and threw myself on the floor and kicked. Life without Baddy! Far away as it all is, I can still feel the agony of desolation that flooded my heart. "I won't have a governess. I'll kill her! I'll murder her!" I shrieked.

My mother rang for her maid and, taking from her dressing table a little gold ruler that she was accustomed to use for the purpose, she whipped me soundly. Then I was sent to my room.

CHAPTER II

Empire—My Mother's Mission

THE end of the Second Empire is still quite vivid in my memory. My father and mother, both glorious specimens of physical perfection, sometimes delighted my *mirettes d'enfant* by appearing as visions of glory before going to the Tuileries in their gorgeous court spendour. My mother was the reigning belle of the time. I well remember the notorious *bal masqué* of Napoleon III where many were admitted, masked, who could otherwise never have passed the gates; and the Emperor's visits to my mother at the Hôtel de la rue de Suresnes as Monsieur Benaguet that caused so much whispering and jealousy at the time. In the *correspondance intime* with my mother that in itself was a maze of political intrigue affairs of all kinds were discussed and the Emperor often bemoaned his incapacity to cope with the overwhelming difficulties ahead of him.

Of the many and varied stories told of the wooing by Napoleon of the beautiful Eugénie, Countess of Teba, I have always liked this one for whose truth I can vouch. Blessed with a cool head as well as a lovely face and with a mother whose shrewdness equalled her ambition, Eugénie retained an admirable self-possession under the fire of the Emperor's fierce passion. She recognised the climax when it came one evening in a murmured request, half plea, half command, for the key to her room. Dropping the Emperor a deep courtesy, she

answered softly: "Par l'église, Monseigneur," with the result that all the world knows.

The ever constant devotion of my parents to the Emperor's cause only increased with the crisis of the Empire. The fatal news of war was received with impulsive French delight and cries of "À Berlin, à Berlin." False assurances of the perfect readiness of the army, given the Emperor by General Leboeuf and the others, led to an equally false sense of confidence and security. "Sire, il ne manque pas un bouton aux guêtres de nos soldats." Possibly no button on the leggings *was* missing but the poor fellows' *godillots* were made of cardboard and lasted only a few days. In everything it was the same. Ready? No, not even begun. Bravest of the brave as the troops were, they could not win over well organised forces. The French army was without proper military command. Lack of clothes and food, a general absence of organisation and, worst of all, treason —brought on the disastrous day of Sedan, hastened by Bazaine of ill-famed memory and Trochu, whose stigma has ever since been the nickname, "Trop chu," past participle of the verb, to fall.

With the capitulation of Sedan came the fall of the Second Empire. The Emperor was taken prisoner, a victim whom circumstances had made commander-in-chief of the army and bearer of all responsibility. As a matter of fact, suffering intensely as he was from Bright's Disease and in absolute ignorance of military tactics, he was a pitiable figurehead.

To Wilhelmsöhe he was taken a prisoner of war. We were at Arcachon at the time and it was as the wife of Okunieff, the Russian ambassador to France, that my mother went, with her suite and me, through France

(then under military occupation) to Belgium, passing around Paris and Versailles where the newly made Emperor of Germany and his troops were located.

Shortly after our arrival at Ochain, the family hunting seat, a telegram was brought to my mother. It was from Wilhelmsöhe, saying: "Comme la Colombe, messagère de la paix, voulez-vous porter le rameau d'olivier à Versailles."

With my father's consent my mother started on a bitter cold day, the snow many feet deep on the ground, her three hours' drive to the nearest station. On arriving at Wilhelmsöhe, she found the Emperor in civilian clothing; he gave her full instructions as to her mission, not minimising the hardships and dangers she might encounter. "Pass unsuspected through the German occupied lines, reach Versailles and deliver to the Emperor William himself the conditions of peace which I wish revised. My principal aim is to secure the return of the French prisoners of war."

At the close of the interview the Emperor took the little scarlet badge of the *Legion d'Honneur* from his buttonhole and pinned it on my mother's breast.

Overwhelmed with emotion, she left on her mission, encountering untold difficulties, crossing the flooded Moselle on a narrow board, the bridge having been destroyed, travelling in cattle trains loaded with Bavarian soldiers, ill-treated, insulted, but keeping to her difficult task. One day, having had a long march, she finally arrived at a station from which a train was leaving and as she was going aboard she was struck by a soldier, knocked off and severely injured. She was taken to a hospital where she was cared for by a comely nurse who was doing the hardest kind of manual labour.

She recognised in her the Grand Duchess Marie de Bade, whom she had often met, most recently at Homburg, where all the society of the Second Empire congregated around the famous roulette tables.

Finally Versailles was reached and in all the glory of the magnificent palace of our kings, in the *Salle des Mirroirs* that has since witnessed the reversal of the fortunes of the German Empire, the newly made Emperor with the Crown Prince Frederick, Bismarck, von Moltke and others received my mother. It was a dramatic illustration of the mutability of human glory. Less than three-quarters of a century before, Louise of Prussia had come begging favour from the conquering Frenchman then at the height of his power, and now a Louise of France was suppliant before a conquering Prussian.

The emotions that overwhelmed my mother may be better understood when it is remembered that these same personages had previously been the guests of the Emperor who was now their prisoner and that the last time she had met them had been at Homburg and Wiesbaden where no signs of disturbance were apparent. Only elegance, beauty, the pursuit of pleasure, were *à l'ordre du jour*. It was a heart-gripping contrast.

Wilhelm was as ever courteous toward the fallen Empire's queen, but the condition of peace that had been closest to the heart of Napoleon III was denied. The Emperor seemed favourably inclined and might have acceded but Field Marshal von Moltke, speaking in German, interposed a positive veto and was emphatically supported by Bismarck. So that my mother failed to bring her mission to complete success. Sad at heart,

she returned under escort put at her disposal by Wilhelm, to Wilhelmsöhe.

Later, the coupé in which Napoleon III left Wilhelmsöhe, travelling through Belgium to sail for England and Chiselhurst where he died, was sent to Argenteau as a souvenir. The eagle encircled with laurel leaves, the seal of the Empire's ownership, had become a bitter emblem.

My parents had become naturalised French citizens in order that they might be appointed representatives of the French Court to the Imperial Court of Austria. This plan was made to gratify a petty ambition of the Emperor's to send as representative of the French Empire to Vienna a member of the same family, bearing the same name, as that Count de Mercy who represented Austria at the royal court of France under Louis XVI. My parents, pleased with the distinction of political preferment, acquiesced but, with the fall of the Second Empire, came the end of this ambitious scheme and they had their Belgian citizenship restored to them.

CHAPTER III

Girlhood

MINE was a lonesome childhood. I was not a boy, it was true, but I should have been and that settled the way I was to be reared. No dolls were ever allowed to develop useless tenderness or a desire for the frivolities of dress—a futile precaution! My toys were soldiers and guns to engender courage and manliness. My only playmate was the little white Angora goat who was my nurse as well. I loved "Nanny" dearly and to my memory of her is probably due the deep understanding and devotion that I have always had for animals.

In general, children of my generation and previous to it had an education very different from that customary nowadays. Yet, even for my young days and making every allowance for the traditional formality in which children of the nobility were reared, my training was unusually severe—English nurses, governesses, special professors for this or that branch of knowledge to make my education complete. My head was crammed full of pieces of information for which, after I had passed my examinations, I had no manner of use. In all this I was not isolated from other children of my station. But the others did have compensating pleasures that were denied to me.

All my tuition I had at home and alone; only my religious instruction with other children. In the class was a distant cousin, a descendant of James I of England. He was called by the other children, "Ton petit mari,"

and as I discovered later, they knew more about the situation than I did. It had been arranged by our families that we should be married as soon as we had reached the proper age. He was very handsome, six years older than I, quite the ideal hero we all have, real or imaginary. It happened that we liked each other and grew accustomed to the idea of our marriage although, according to French custom, we saw very little of one another and were always guarded by chaperons.

With Baddy's departure all the wicked in me that she alone knew how to control came to the surface, seeking revenge. I do not speak too strongly when I say that I was murderously inclined toward her successor who was really an unpleasant, incompetent and stupid prig. I clamoured for Baddy, offering to endure all I could invent of hardships as inducement for her return. But no, Baddy was gone and I could not even see her. Convinced finally of this, I resolved on the departure of Mlle. de Broglie. Fair means had no effect so I watched my opportunity to try others.

One day she more especially worried me, slapping my fingers with a narrow steel ruler. I do not plead I did not deserve it. I have no doubt I did but the black devils broke loose in me. Snatching up a pair of scissors, I retaliated with them. A fist-fight ensued. Finally I got her between my knee and the wall, holloaing at the top of her voice. She managed to bend back toward me my left hand which held the scissors, point forward. Deeper and deeper it dug into my shoulder until I was bleeding profusely. The pain was acute and I retain the scar to this day, but I never let her go, pounding her with my knee while my right hand pinned her to the wall, until we were separated by main force. She packed

her things and left. That was what I wanted. But Baddy did not come back.

Alone in the chapel of our country home, instead of with the other girls who attended our church in the grand display of their white robes, I received my first communion and confirmation from the hands of the Archbishop of Tyr, brother of my great-grandfather, whom I worshipped. And here I must digress for a moment to tell his story.

He had been colonel in the armies of Napoleon I until he was thirty years old. He went through the Spanish and Egyptian campaigns and rode back wounded and delirious from the retreat of the Bérèsina in a straw-covered army wagon, with two soldiers who died on the way of typhoid fever.

Recovered from his wound, he departed for Italy to claim his fiancée, Mlle. de Trévise, only to learn that she had died the day before his arrival. Shortly after he met the Prince de Rohan, his *compagnon d'armes* in many campaigns, who had seen his bride of a few days burnt to death in her ball dress before his eyes. She had leaned to kiss her husband's picture that stood on a mantel over the fireplace and the flimsy material of her gown had caught the blaze. Shrieking with fright she inhaled the flames and died in terrible agony.

These two poured their grief and loneliness into each other's ears and together took the resolve to renounce worldly joys and enter holy orders. This they did, the Prince to become Cardinal and my great-uncle nuncio to the Pope and Archbishop of Tyr. It was he who told the story of his appointment one morning at the *palais* of one of the foreign ambassadors to the German court while he was nuncio to the Pope. After the man had

twice unsuccessfully tried to gain admittance for my uncle to the ambassador's apartment, he cried impatiently: "It's too bad. He must be sleeping soundly in Morpheus' arms."

The servant eyed him for a moment, then answered blandly: "Monseigneur, I do not know if her name is Morpheus but she is a very handsome woman."

He had the French spirit of fun, *l'esprit gaulois*, and he could tell dangerous stories with so flashing a wit and so delicate a finesse that the most prudent had no excuse to blush.

Old, old, old as he was when I remember him he was always the dashing, brilliant Hussar. Though Archbishop *in partibus* of Tyr, the purple robes of the church's dignity were draped as a cloak over the shining white uniform of the *Hussar de l'Empire*. And he took good care that the cloak should conceal as little as possible of the uniform.

He solemnised the marriage of my father and mother, baptised me, gave me my first communion and confirmed me, and he would have performed the marriage between my cousin and myself had it taken place, but when I was married later to the choice of my family the dear colonel-archbishop was dead.

After my confirmation, church duties were weekly and tedious. I grew tired of making the same avowals at confession each Saturday and one day out of naughtiness I said:

"Father, I am in love."

"With whom, my child?" he queried, shocked.

"His name is August," I answered blandly.

"Where do you see him, my child?"

"At home," I whispered.

"That is wrong and it must never happen again. Who is it?"

"August the emperor. It is only his statue, Father, that I am drawing my lessons from."

He seemed relieved and asked: "Is it a bust or a full-sized statue?"

My answer was, "Only his head," but I pondered long and in vain on his question. Of sex I was as ignorant as when I came into the world. Indeed, where could I have learned of it? Not from my parents who saw me as little as possible and spoke to me only to give me orders. I had no companions, no books but texts. From one of my governesses, perhaps, if there had been any clear-sighted enough to see and supply the need. Unfortunately there was none.

At this time my mother, an accomplished musician and a connoisseur and enthusiast all her life, undertook to teach me to play. The lessons were given in the tower at Ochain and I went to them stupefied and dazed with fear. Again and again I who never cried would stand at the foot of the stairs sobbing in terror of the approaching ordeal, praying that something would happen to avert it. They were conducted according to the following method. I would seat myself at the piano, my mother at my side, and begin to play. When I struck a wrong note—under the circumstances sufficiently often—bang! would come her ruler across the back of my hand. It was simple, uncomplicated. She never spoke. There were no directions, no rules, no teaching but the steady blow of that sharp-hinged rod across my fingers till they were raw and bleeding or an equally effective warning on my temple with the knuckles of her bright-ringed hand. I winced but made no outcry. Only when the end came I was quivering and spent with exhaustion. I did not

learn much from my mother and she finally gave me up as hopeless and engaged a professor, under whose guidance I grew to play very well. But I have never played since one day at Argenteau when, rattling off a gay duet with a young cousin, he suddenly collapsed on the keyboard and was lifted dead.

I had never had any spending money. One day I was called before my parents and told that if I passed my "baccho," (the baccalaureate examinations) I should be allowed ten francs a month for pin money, to dine with my parents and to wear long skirts. For these three things I would have sold my soul and I was immediately transformed from the laziest, most indifferent and detestable of pupils into a very model of industry.

At the time of these important negotiations between my parents and myself, my cousin Fitz James, *mon petit mari*, left for five years' military service in Africa while I was to have three at least of very hard study. I was called to the drawing-room to say good-bye. We shook hands under the watchful eyes of our respective mothers, feeling sheepish and unnatural, and were glad to get through with the farewell, "à dans cinq ans," when on his return we should be married.

Things were made harder for me, the rules more inflexible. Still another governess came, a dry, cold, dignified knowledge-machine. At least work advanced. Two years' drill with her and special teachers, six months' extra *surchauffage* with professors from the Sorbonne, and I passed my baccalaureate at seventeen, nearly a year ahead of time with the maximum of a hundred points.

It was during this period of intensive study that I cut my hair off. It was long and luxuriant, falling below my knees and difficult to arrange. Working every

moment as I was, I grudged the time I had to spend on it and with a small nail scissors cut it to shoulder length. So appreciative was my mother of this admirable scheme that she decided to better the experiment and had my head shaved close. Over this ridiculous poll I was obliged to wear a net. What a hideous object I was! But even for this there was compensation. Though it never grew to its old length, when it did appear it was a really beautiful copper colour and a great satisfaction to my vanity.

And still for six months life remained the same except that I had my ten francs a month and less tedious and less driving studies. My parents dismissed the knowledge-machine and engaged Mlle. Roeland, a cultured lady and a really exquisite creature, to polish off, I suppose, all the knowledge that had been so rudely grafted on. She had become converted to the Catholic faith and was serving her novitiate at our home, preparatory to entering the cloister of which she later became Mother Superior.

One day I admired her beautiful hands and well-kept nails. The next day she wore gloves and when I did see her hands accidentally without the gloves, her nails were cut straight, down to the quick.

With my new governess study and life were more agreeable, time passed pleasantly, but my thoughts were fixed ahead. I was compressed to explosion and longed only for the time when my cousin would come, as had been arranged, to marry me and take me away.

Then, like a bolt out of a clear sky, I received the news that the marriage with my cousin would not take place. No reason was given me. I saw neither him nor his family. I received no letters. I was told that he had

THE AUTHOR'S MOTHER AT THE TIME OF HER IN-
TIMACY WITH NAPOLEON III.

THE CALÈCHE IN WHICH THE AUTHOR'S MOTHER WAS ACCUSTOMED TO TAKE HER AFTERNOON DRIVE.

THE AUTHOR AT THIRTEEN.

forgotten me and that his silence and absence were the proofs of his inconstancy. At first I could not believe but as time passed without any word of him, I set about in my grief and disappointment trying to forget him too, not willing that he alone should have the privilege of forgetting.

My approaching début made it necessary that I should learn to dance and for a time the problem of the then fashionable twostep-waltz agitated the household. My parents were earnestly opposed to it but those who knew warned them against the risk of allowing me to sit out any dance, even the waltzes. So learn it I did and, oh, even with that horrid little dancing master—one shoulder up and the other down—the lessons were never long enough. I said very little about the waltzing but I would complain of the baffling intricacies of the quadrille, the only dance my parents really approved of, and under cover of mastering these would revel in the delight of the waltz.

The next question to be decided was where the début should be made. Very few Buonapartist salons were giving dances. The Royalists were not favourably disposed toward the representatives of the *Régime Imperial*. To make my first bow in financial or Republican circles was not to be thought of. The problem was solved to perfection by an invitation from Queen Isabella of Spain to a ball at the Palais de Castille. Admirable! It was neither this régime nor that but the queen of a foreign country. For once my mother was all smiles. She condescended to advise me how to arrange my hair and told me what she intended me to wear. I knew that here was a battle that she thought worth the winning and I was fired with her own determination to conquer. A new

dazzling world was opening before me. I caught the first strains of the music and a glimpse of the first fairy lights. I was delirious with excitement.

My white tulle dress, the tightly fitting satin bodice, the crown of natural La France roses completed my happiness when, with a deep bow, I bent my head to kiss the queen's hand. Only it was not the queen's hand that my lips touched but my own. I had heard disturbing stories of the skin affection from which she suffered, so prudently turning my own gloved hand a little, I brushed it with my mouth.

My success was soon apparent. Presentation followed presentation and my mother felt her ground with the old Royalist dowagers grow firmer under her feet. She radiated satisfaction and I sunned myself in the warmth of her rare approval and of the masculine admiration which there was no mistaking. The culminating triumph came when I danced a quadrille with Comte d'Avaray, the catch of the season. My cup was full.

The seal of our success came the following week in the form of an invitation from the Duchesse de Maillé, a pillar of the Royalist clan. I continued in favour, my mother's tension relaxed and after a dozen balls and receptions, all more or less alike, where I learned something of the art of the polite world, the Paris season was over and we returned to Argenteau.

Offers of marriage came to me through my parents but I rejected them. My heart clung to my *petit mari* and stubbornly I refused to accept any other. I had resolved to forget him but my heart would not forget. Then letters were shown to me, saying that he was engaged to be married and had deliberately jilted me. I asked to be allowed to see him but denial was the only

answer, ever-ready and systematic. Life was heavy, lonesome, tedious.

Fearing, I suppose, to pull too hard on the reins my parents took me to Cowes during the regatta season. There I was presented to the Prince and Princess of Wales and, later on in London, I made my bow to Queen Victoria.

The journey from Calais to Dover, that I did later seventeen times in one month, was to me an enchantment, like freedom to a colt. I found a cigarette somewhere and, with head out of the porthole, kneeling on my berth, I puffed away, enjoying every second, wild with delight. It was my first sea trip and my first cigarette but not even the combination made me sick.

We remained four weeks in the Isle of Wight, a month of bliss.

Their Royal Highnesses wished me to marry in England and one *parti* combined all the qualifications to satisfy the most ambitious. But a telegram to my father, asking his consent, met with irrevocable refusal because of the difference in religious creeds. It was much later and with lively interest that I learned of the one temptation to which my father had succumbed.

Prince Benjamin de Rohan, a master whip, was his close friend. The story goes that the Prince once drove his mail coach, a four-in-hand, at a gallop up the steps of the Trocadero gardens, a height of some sixty or seventy feet. He was older than my father by several years and Gregory, a Hungarian of unpronounceable name, was about as many years younger. They were the three constant companions of His Royal Highness, William Prince of Orange, in all sorts of enterprises. The Prince, known on Parisian boulevards and in the

inner circles as Citron, was the eldest son of the King of Holland and Queen Sophie of Wurtemburg, and heir to the Dutch throne. He was born in 1841 and at the time I am speaking of was thirty-six years old. He was a dyed-in-the-wool Parisian, adored Paris, its pleasures and temptations, would not return to Holland, would not behave himself. My father, being Dutch on his mother's side, was urged to use his influence to tame and harness the Prince to his duties and as a means thereto was persuaded to consider the marriage of his daughter to the Prince. That it was a thorough *mauvais sujet* to whom he proposed to deliver me was apparently no cause for hesitation, the only drawback being the difference in religion. A Calvinist son-in-law, even if he was to be king, was beyond my father's power to accept comfortably.

But in spite of his scruples, he was persuaded to see a duty toward his mother's country, the bitter pill well coated with the hope that his daughter would be queen of Holland and he himself perhaps (knowing Citron) the power behind the throne. My mother, so she said, preferred a first-family marriage in Paris to any country's crown, but was perfectly satisfied with whatever arrangement would take me out of her presence and off her hands. I was only fifteen, deep in my lessons, ignorant of what was going on about me. Later I had the story from my father who spoke of it a little wistfully, lingering over it as one does over a cherished dream—naughty, but, oh, so very nice!

The Prince had agreed to the marriage, so long as it was to be later, and as a duty to his country to ensure the dynasty of the house of Orange. Meanwhile, he was burning Montmartre. My father no longer joined the

trio in this period of high revelry and folly. He was not the hard drinker that the others were and usually left off at a point where they were only well started. Having consented to this marriage, it seemed that His Royal Highness was resolved to reach the limit and pass it. He went so far that one night he went too far and was found dazed, dying, in a Montmartre den. He was brought back in secret to his dwelling and there died. But if it was Citron who died miserably in Montmartre, it was His Royal Highness, William Prince of Orange, heir to the Dutch throne, whose body returned to the Netherlands to be interred in state.

So ended an episode in which I was the central though unconscious figure. It is strange to look back and contemplate what might have been if William of Orange had lived and married and had an heir. There would have been no second marriage of William III to the Princess de Waldeck Pyrmont, no Wilhelmina to occupy the throne of Holland to-day.

After the delight of my first holiday, life was more irksome than ever. The division between my parents often put me in a difficult position. Of the relation between them I understood nothing. Their habit of formal ceremony with one another I took for granted. But many things I saw and, childlike, registered. And in later years, recalling my mother's curling lip or my father's dark frown as they exchanged freezingly polite compliments, my memories were lit into significance by my maturer knowledge of the world and the human heart.

Now I realised only that, though they had as little sympathy with one another as with me, on the subject of my marriage they were firmly united against me. My unaccustomed obstinacy puzzled them and angered them

more. I was in deep disgrace, but, if I realised at bottom that I was fighting a losing battle, I fought none the less desperately.

I was then very religious, as a young person who lacks proper human friendship and counsel is likely to be, and to the little chapel in the woods I went day after day, begging deliverance from this life which had become an inferno. I was so evidently *de trop;* my parents showed me so clearly that they would not be put a second season to the trouble of taking me out.

In October I fell ill of a malignant fever. One may have two relapses but the third is always fatal. After my second relapse I received the last Sacraments and, in a half-coma, I heard that the end was expected at any moment. It has not come yet! I recovered and had again the same excruciating situation to face. I could not go through with it. Summoning all my will, I abandoned the dear hope that had lived so long in my heart and yielded at last to my mother's incessant urging. I would accept the *parti* they chose for me, whoever it was. I would yield my rights in myself to them, acknowledge myself their goods to auction off to the best advantage. I gave them my *parole d'honneur* and awaited their selection indifferently.

And yet I was able to extract some sweetness from the situation. I had struggled with all the strength at my command, the collapse of my dream had meant a pain deeper, except for the pain of Baddy's departure, than any I had yet known. But once the die was cast, my resilience again came to the rescue. "I shall be free," I thought; "no lessons, no scolding, no one to tell me what I may or may not do. Dancing—theatres—balls—admiration!" Ah, yes! The prospect was not without charm.

CHAPTER IV

Marriage

I SHALL always remember the 18th of December, 1882. In the morning, cold and bitter, we left the station of Argenteau in our private car, arriving at the *Gare du Nord*, Paris, at seven that evening.

At dinner my mother, after reading several letters, passed three of them to my father. Both seemed delighted.

After dinner they very seriously told me of three excellent *partis* asking to marry me; I was to say which I preferred. Each was named separately, with full enumeration of their respective advantages. One I had never seen, the other I barely remembered, while the third was the quadrille dancer to whom I have referred as the catch of the previous season.

I really did not care and said so.

"C'est insupportable! I suppose you expect me to drag you along to next season's entertainments, but I will not. You will marry one of these excellent partis at once, or you will go to the convent. Things have to be decided one way or the other to-night!" said my mother.

"I don't care," was my calm reply. "You have my promise to abide by your choice."

So four strips of paper were cut and a name written on each, including the convent. Folding them carefully so that no name could be seen, I was told to draw my future and my fate.

I really did not care. What was life now, anyway? Thus it was I drew the paper with Herbert's name on it. That very night my father and mother accepted the offer of marriage made by his parents. Truly my marriage was a lottery.

This was the evening of the 18th of December. I had seen this very nice young gentleman at several balls, never since. He came to pay his court every Friday, my mother's reception day. We went to his mother's weekly At Home, a total, all told, of eight visits a month. We sometimes played bézique, but never at his mother's; she disapproved of card playing. We had absolutely nothing to say to each other, speaking practically different languages, knowing different people. He was an ultra-Royalist, reared in that atmosphere; I was one of the detested *Régime Imperial*.

Herbert was a good-looking, well-groomed, extremely self-satisfied young man. His naturally curly hair was carefully combed and flattened out as if ironed. And in spite of his looseness of feature, his puffy yellowish-white skin, his slightly bulging eyes of an insipid blue, the *tout ensemble* was not unpleasing. His perfectly polished manners and excellent education were beyond criticism.

He was tall and well-built but the absolute lack of athletic exercise or any kind of outdoor sport made him at twenty-five more like a stately major domo than an alert and active young man. But there he was—*le plus beau parti de France*—and was it not, so argued my parents, a wonderful conquest! A scion of the Royalist party bending his knee to ask in marriage the only daughter of ardent Buonapartists because she happened to be the belle of the season!

As for the young man—I do not know. Like me, he

probably did as he was told. And I would be a charming figure to introduce into the dull family circle and it would be pleasant to be the husband of the prettiest bride of the year. He agreed to my selection as he would have agreed to the purchase of a good-looking horse or a fine ornament—with no more feeling or delicacy. And indeed, poor fellow, what more could have been expected of him, reared as he had been in a formal and artificial atmosphere, in a household dedicated to the gods of wealth and social pre-eminence.

January passed and, on the first of February, a Saturday, we were married at the *Mairie*. This was the civil marriage. The church wedding was to take place the following Monday. I wore a dress of plain navy blue serge, my first corset, first high heels, and the large pearl earrings I am wearing to this day. After the ceremony my mother took the newly made Comtesse for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. Somehow the incident of the longed-for ride in the *calèche* denied to my childhood came to my mind, and I could not help smiling at the change in my situation. I was now no longer an incumbrance, but a chattel successfully bartered in the marriage market.

To wind up the eventful day my mother took me to see my aunt, the Princesse d'Hénin. She had been in the habit of leaving me there for hours while she went about her own affairs, secure behind the shelter of Mimi's innocent company. But Mimi was left in church or at a convent or with some old aunt or with Bobonette, my mother's old governess. Her pretext in leaving me was always the same. I heard it many a time: "You understand, I must make these calls" or "I am in charity bound to investigate this case. I cannot take the child with me. I will call for her presently." Much later I realised that

these charity calls were hours stolen for rendezvous to be spent with X, Y or Z.

The aunt with whom I was left on the day of my marriage was a very austere, but a really good and virtuous woman, the youngest sister of my father's mother by a second marriage; she was extremely wealthy and had been married off through my grandfather's influence to an adorable scamp, much younger than herself. Her life had been a daily misery, but she weathered the storms, protected her fortune, said nothing, took care of her bones (that is all she was, skin and bones) and finally buried her husband and lived to a great old age, quite contentedly.

We sat in the *petit salon* of her magnificent house near the Champs Elysées, I at her feet in front of a huge log fire. She removed my hat and, patting my copper locks, told me some news or other while I felt I should choke of laughter as I looked up and saw her skinny breast-bone, something like an underfed rooster's, emerging from between the narrow slit of her fluffy, lace-trimmed dress. But if I did—and I did—want to laugh, I was soon alert to her question.

"Tell me, dear, how it came about for you to know Herbert well enough to love him."

"Love him!" I exclaimed. "I don't love him. I love Philip (her second son) much better!"

"Good gracious!" she exclaimed; then *sotto voce*, "What an escape!" Not very complimentary, to be sure. But she needn't have worried. A second son! Pah! Non, merci!

"But that is a terrible spirit in which to enter matrimony."

"Oh, my dear aunt, what does it matter? It was marry

or lessons or a convent. Once married, at least I shall have my liberty, dye my hair bright red like the Princesse de Sagan, paint my lips like mamma and—" She caught me tightly to her breast, horrified. I felt the bone digging into me and put my hand between its blade and my face.

"But, child, this is terrible, terrible!"

Having finally released myself from the pressure and regained my breath, I said: "Terrible? Not at all! Herbert will go to his club and I shall go about alone without a chaperon and do my own sweet will like mamma."

"Child, child, *child!* That may be so—during the day—but after?"

"After," I asserted, "when I have danced till I am tired or skated or been to the theatre or to supper, I shall go home and go to bed and to sleep."

"But—your husband?" cried the poor, dear soul.

"Oh, I don't know," I replied airily. "I suppose he will be at the Jockey or Sporting Club, playing bézique."

"But," she persisted, "that is *not* married life."

"Of course it is, aunt; am I not married now and will be so a second time on Monday at the church?" Again she attempted to bring me close to her but, remembering the recent uncomfortable pressure, I moved to my knees and laid my head on her shoulder, well on the side, so that she could hold me to her heart all she liked.

"Ma petite," she said, "that is not all. Don't you know that Herbert and you on Monday, when night comes, will be man and wife?—that sublime relationship when love binds you, that abominable disgrace when no love exists? Don't you know that on Monday night his room will be yours, your bed his to sleep in?"

I pulled away from her. "How can you say such a thing? It's not, it can't be true." She came to me and, with my head against hers, as we sobbed together, she told me more and more and tore the veil of ignorance finally from my eyes.

It was late and quite dark when my mother returned in a hurry. My aunt took her aside, bidding me go to the billiard room and what they said I never knew. But when I was called and had kissed my aunt's hand in farewell, the dear lady still had tears in her eyes and turned away to the fireplace, murmuring: "Pauvre petite! Pauvre petite!"

My mother, half way down the grand salon, her eyes shining like steel daggers, cold rage hissing in her voice, said to me, "Allons, venez! Vous avez assez fait la bête pour le dernier jour!" Then she sneered, "Madame d'Avaray, avec moi cela ne prend pas."

That evening there was a big dinner at my grandfather's to celebrate the civil marriage. I was missing, too broken, too wretched to go. Besides, my mother feared what I might do. So she humoured me and allowed me to go to bed. When I begged her in tears to stop the marriage on Monday, she condescended to say: "Speak of it to your father to-morrow, but be quiet now, be reasonable. If he sees you excited, he won't listen to you. On ne prend pas des mouches avec du vinaigre."

My maid brought me some tisane ordered by my mother. What was in it I do not know but it was late Sunday when I woke up half dazed, slowly realising that from contentment with my approaching emancipation I had awakened into a world shattered, dark and evil.

When I was dressed and had said my prayers, I went to my father's door and knocked. "It is I, Mimi."

"Entre la jeune." He was standing in front of a looking-glass in which he could see me though his back was turned. He wore a sort of long Arab burnous of thinnest silk and was carefully brilliantining his whiskers. He turned to me. "Allons la jeune! Pas de temps à perdre. Nous allons à la messe de onze heures."

I ran to him. "Papa, papa, le couvent—la prison—tout, tout, tout—mais pas de mariage lundi." These last words I said kneeling at his feet. Evidently my mother had coached him, for he actually hissed at me: "Stupide, idiote, folle! Pas de mariage! Mais tu *es* mariée!" And catching me by my shoulders, absolutely beside himself with rage, he shook me hard. "Yes, married, married, married, thank God!" and pushed me back roughly. How long I lay there I do not know. When Louis, my father's valet, who had been with him before I was born, came to attend to his duties, he found and revived me. "Il ne faut pas se mettre dans des états." Poor grammar, but a kind heart! He got my father's special cologne and verbena lotion and bathed my forehead. He well knew the misery of my young life and tried to console me. "Et voilà Mlle. Mimi, une grande dame mariée, maintenant la plus belle dame de Paris." He was offering a child a new toy to play with but I was no longer a child.

Somehow I realised my fate, and that it was sealed and finished. I was married, nothing could alter that, I was married. I might better accept that fate than beat my head against it.

That evening I confronted my parents together with

one question—voiced by frozen lips, frozen eyes, frozen heart. "Am I really married? Can nothing be done to make it not so?"

"You are really, positively, legally married since yesterday. There exists no divorce in France and the church ceremony to-morrow is just one of religious feeling and social display."

I remember throwing back my head and crying dramatically: "You have committed a crime. May God forgive you!"

Again a lost battle! After this blow I took the count of nine, quivering and doubtful, but ten found me on my feet, valiant, determined to seek what life had to offer of the intoxications of pleasure. Two hours later, to the delight of my parents, I was ready to go to the dinner and reception given by my husband's family in the immense prison-like palace, shut off from the street by a huge chiselled bronze door. Then came a tremendous courtyard with the house at the far end. On the other side of the palace was the garden, dull and sad-looking, shut in by high walls on three sides. I shiver at the thought of the place.

The evening was tedious and boresome but it was a social success. I made the best of an odious fact. I was secretly amused, too, if the truth must be told, to see the unconcealed envy in the eyes of so many dowagers with marriageable daughters. My new family was all smiles and the grandfather, a well-known man-about-town in his day, took delight in parading me around. My husband wore as usual too tightly fitting shoes (he had a very pretty foot) and hopped miserably from one foot to the other, talking and grimacing to the douairières and their daughters. At last the evening

came to an end and I went back to my girlhood room. Night brought sleep and peace and in the morning the preparations for the noon ceremony at the church began.

My father took me to the altar. Owing to my mother's odd wish, instead of silks and satins, my wedding dress was made of white, weblike Indian cashmere —the softest of thin wool—tightly fitting, laced in the back, with a very long court train, the dress lined throughout with marvellous Venetian lace. Over a wreath of natural orange blossoms a veil of tulle covered me completely. I wore no jewels but the pearl earrings, a decoration brooch, the ruby engagement ring and now the additional wedding circle. Fancy that after all these years and events I still have these same jewels on me while I write these lines!

The reception took place in the sacristy of the church, which was far too small to hold the great crowd of worldly grandees who were present. For they came in great numbers, representatives of foreign courts, scions of French and foreign nobility, of different creeds, countries and political partisanships.

The Imperial family—in exile—was represented officially by Count Waleski; the King—also in exile—by the Duc de Mirepoix and the Duc d'Aosta. The Grand Duke and Duchess Vladimir of Russia were there, the Belgian sovereign, the Archduke and Duchess of Austria, the Duke of Edinburgh representing the English crowned head, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand representing the Austrian sovereigns, Maréchal MacMahon and his wife the Duchess of Magenta, who was a cousin, Cabanel, Carolus Duran and other celebrities, a veritable pot-pourri.

We stood to receive their congratulations and then

walked arm in arm down the immense nave of the Madeleine to the thundering sound of Mendelssohn's Wedding March that would put life, I believe, into a dead soul and make it walk proudly out of its tomb. In our case, though, Chopin's Funeral March would have been more suitable. We got into our coupé with the two pretty, pampered horses and were driven to my parents' house where I was to stay for luncheon and change my wedding dress for a travelling costume, while my husband went to his home for the same purpose. Possibly the thought comes of some expression of tenderness exchanged between us during that drive—a very short distance, I admit. But no, not a word! As we drove from the church amidst the crowd of lookers-on, he said: "It really went very well. Everything was quite perfect. We won't have much time; the train is at four. What a beautiful day!" and so on. I had not much to say. Arriving at my parents' home, he helped me and my three-metre train out of the carriage, kissed my hand and directed the footman home.

I hurried to my room to remove as quickly as possible those terrible wedding garments, and was ready in my grey English tweed travelling dress when luncheon was announced. I took my hat downstairs. I remember it—a grey felt with dark grey feathers mixed with pale blue. I kissed my mother's hand. She was as always the beautiful icicle, cruel in her statuesque glorious loveliness. My father, as was his wont when he was pleased with me, took my head in his hands, lifted my face to his and kissed my hair. He was nervous, his lips twitched, but he was determined to carry the situation off with some show of bravado.

"Allons, voyez la jeune qui s'en 'va-t-en voyage'!"

I could not stand his voice or eyes. They were blurred and said as clearly as if he had worded it: "Poor child! I am sorry for you. But what else could I do?" I could not stand those eyes. I closed mine and nodded acknowledgment and caught his two hands, kissing them again and again. Then luncheon proceeded. When I was ready to leave and had put on my hat, my mother wrapped around me a wonderful, long zibeline coat, light as a feather and lined with ermine, a gift from the Emperor and Empress of Russia brought by the Ambassador, Count Kapnitz. That coat was destined to go through many adventures with me.

My maid had gone long before with the travelling handbag and its gold-mounted toilet articles which had come as a gift from the English sovereign. There had been besides a long string of pearls from the Prince of Wales and a pair of flawless diamond earrings from our Belgian king.

My husband came hurrying into the salon, out of breath, assured my parents that we had to go at once, came the final handkissings and au revoirs and we were off.

The maid and valet were at the station, all was checked and attended to; we had only to step into our private compartment, en route for Fontainebleau. We had the morning papers and read the descriptions of last night's reception and this morning's ceremony. As we read, Herbert voiced his first regret, which I was destined to hear repeated so often, at leaving Paris for four long months, a "century," terrible to think of.

I felt quite the other way but wondered why this Fontainebleau stop was necessary when we might have been on our way to Italy. "Ah," he said, "that is what

I told my mother, but she went to Fontainebleau on her wedding day and insisted on our doing the same. C'est idiot, but there was really no reason to object."

Yet, as Paris was left farther and farther behind, my husband grew more restless and nervous. He walked about the compartment, gnawing his moustache, repeating: "C'est idiot, idiot." Finally, hearing the call, "Melun," the last stop before Fontainebleau, he exclaimed: "Sapristi! I have forgotten my keys!" And off he went.

I thought he had gone to telegraph or find his valet but the train moved on and there was no Herbert on our arrival at Fontainebleau. I told his valet what had happened and he took the keys out of his pocket. "Wire him that you have them," I said and took my way to the hotel. The next train from Paris was due at 10 P.M. I ate my dinner, a solitary bride, and went to bed.

Many months later I discovered that my husband had had for a number of years a *bonne amie*, chosen for him by his father as a reliable, healthy and discreet educator. She tutored him and held him her perfect slave. And he, poor man, as we approached Fontainebleau, realising his new responsibilities and that he could expect no help from an innocent bride, became suddenly panicstricken and took refuge in flight. I learned later that he passed that night with his instructress.

I was awakened at daybreak the next morning by a bugle, calling "Hallali." I went to the window and saw many of the gay crowd that I had met at balls, others whom I did not know. They were headed by a bad boy, my husband's cousin, who shouted: "Où est Herbert? Où est Herbert?" I told him through the open

window that he had gone back the night before to Paris for the keys. They rocked with laughter at the tale and finally galloped off.

At about noon Herbert arrived all in a flurry, making many excuses. "Forgive me, it has been a case of continuous contretemps. It rained in Paris this morning. I could not get a sapin and missed the early train. Last night when I received Servin's telegram saying that he had those miserable keys, I hurried to the station. Sacre bleu, the train had left. I did not want my mother to know of all this, nor my friends at the club, so I put up anywhere and without my valise. I certainly had a rough time."

As I had been only too pleased at his absence, I entered into the spirit of his excuses and we had luncheon and laughed over his mishaps. Finally he said: "Why stay any longer in this dull place? Let us go off to-night." I was delighted to agree and that night we went back to Paris to take our train at the *Gare de Lyon.*

Two: L'ÉTÉ

Two: L'ÉTÉ

CHAPTER V

My Wedding Journey

IT was en route for Italy that I began to assert myself in my new rôle, and the mirror gave me a different report now than when I had made my earlier dissection of myself about twelve years before. The hair was more coppery and prettily arranged, the eyebrows had grown at last, the eyes had remained the same with perhaps an added note of sadness that the years had given them, the nose had taken its definite well-chiselled shape, the chin had either developed or it seemed to have, the mouth promised many things. I had good, regular teeth and showed them all when I laughed. Those terribly large ears were half hidden under the copper locks. I was tall, slight and straight.

We arrived in Italy, stopping at Florence, then Venice, where my husband at first would not go and, once there, would not stay. He had always an abnormal horror and dread of disease. The miasmas from the canals frightened him and he left as soon as he heard there was fever in the town. He would not go to Rome or Naples for the same reason. I went alone, and shall always remember the snow falling down the chimney in the open fireplace in Naples at the end of February. It was on this trip that I picked up a sugar-spoon with a bullock's head on its handle in the ruins of Pompeii. It was so battered and blackened as

to be almost unrecognisable, but I had it restored, an exact replica of the one in the museum at Naples, and it still adorns my dining-room table.

On our way to Verona I had a lesson as to what might be expected in Italy by a good-looking traveller, even if she were a lady accompanied by her husband. After we boarded the train at Florence, a smart officer took great pains to make clear to me his admiration. I felt very foolish and uncomfortable. Several times I tried to get the attention of my husband who was sleeping in the seat beside me, but in vain. "Let me alone" or "Let me sleep" was his invariable response. The officer found all this very amusing and, sitting opposite me, went on with his little romance without words more energetically than ever. Finally, as I was getting up to go to the other side of my husband, he caught hold of me and kissed me. I slapped his face with equal zest, half falling into my husband's lap as a result. This time he woke up, furious at being again disturbed. The officer smiled wickedly and as the train slowed down for Verona and he made ready to leave, threw a card into the seat I had vacated and a kiss as a parting salute.

When we visited the Solfatara, an extinct crater, the guard led a poor little ugly cur into the vapour that rose from the crater. It seemed that it was the custom for the satisfaction of visitors' curiosity to leave these dogs until they were overcome and then to replace them. But this one had seen his last day of that kind of misery. When he returned to consciousness he was comfortably settled on the front cushion of the landau. Later he was sent to Argenteau where he proved a good watch-dog, and stayed till he died.

THE AUTHOR AND HER MOTHER AT COWES AFTER HER DÉBUT.

THE AUTHOR IMMEDIATELY AFTER HER MARRIAGE.

In a terrific gale which made my poor husband regret his dear Paris, his Jockey Club and his race track more every hour, we landed in Salonika and from there went on to Athens and Constantinople, making the French Embassy our headquarters. The Marquis de Noailles and his widely known Russian wife, who rolled cigarettes in two fingers, were France's representatives there, not to mention Dudu, their son. He was a terror, always in mischief, and the climax came one evening when he set fire to the embassy by lighting fireworks in the drawing room during a dinner given in honour of His Royal Highness, the Duc de Chartres, and his staff. It was rather exciting.

We were given a Turkish luncheon by one of the native high officials, one of the real Turks, who did not have a French or English gloss over the Turk foundation; a combination, by the way, productive of no good. An exception must be made in the case of Munir Pasha who occupied an official position in Paris for many years and, except for the fez he wore, would have passed anywhere for a delightful Frenchman. The dinner which he gave for the Duc de Chartres and us was quite a European affair and perfectly served. One thing, however, was to me overwhelming. I was sitting at his right hand and was about to eat an oyster on the half-shell when he said: "I wish you to observe that these are real natives, straight from England."

"Heavens!" I thought. "A six-day trip!"

But I have digressed from my real Turkish meal and there again I did not realise what was expected of me. There had been placed whole in the centre of the table a sheep, apparently cooked to perfection and flanked with tempting heaps of rice, the grains standing apart

from each other like fluffy flakes. The Duc de Chartres was our host's vis-à-vis and I was seated at the duke's right hand. After several salaams the chief Turk advanced his hand in salute toward me across the table. This went on for some moments until in perplexity I asked the duke what it meant. He gave me the cue which puzzled me more than ever. The duke, smiling, had said in French: "Don't seem to hesitate. Reach out with three fingers of your right hand and pick off some meat."

I hated to do it but out went my right hand across the table and, digging three fingers into the brown flesh of the sheep, I picked up quite easily, though it was not cut, a generous portion together with the rice. While I was still wondering what to do with my fingers, a bowl of perfumed water was passed to me. The duke laughingly helped himself in the same manner and it was fun to see my husband's horror as he too found himself compelled to go through the ordeal. "They eat like savages," he grumbled. But we were obliged to admit that this barbecued sheep was perfection.

The Sultan, Abdul Hamid, was a barbarous bloodthirsty savage who sanctioned numerous fiendish massacres of the Armenians until finally the whole civilised world rose in angry protest against him. He was a monster of crime, a demon incarnate, yes; but, when he chose to be, a cultured and charming gentleman. He could speak many languages but rarely admitted that he even understood them. The interpreter was always there.

The strange effect of his half-closed eyes that seemed to gaze more piercingly thus than when they were wide open, the sensual cruelty of his lips, made of his face a

half revolting, half fascinating mask. He was most kind and gracious to me but on the three occasions when I was in his presence, at the Dolma Balché, at the harem and at Yildiz Kiosk, that ideal palace on the Bosphorus, I was uncomfortably conscious of his uncanny power and was always relieved to get away whole.

The famous imperial yacht, an old large-wheeled Atlantic liner, *The Sultanieh*, was a floating palace. Slowly—it could only creep—it would take the favoured women of his harem for an outing on the Bosphorus or the Sea of Marmora. More than once some favourite of a past hour was sent through a traphole down into the blue depths of the Bosphorus, as I learned for myself. Yildiz Kiosk was provided with the same sort of outlet into its waters.

In spite of his tyrannical power the Sultan went in deadly fear of his life. Never was it known at which mosque he would worship. Often en route he would order a change. His fear of death was abject. He dreaded a sudden knife in some avenging hand. It was said that with his own thin powerful fingers he had strangled more than one suspect. How many were hidden behind the fairy-like exterior of Yildiz Kiosk, awaiting that final drop into the Bosphorus, no one but Abdul himself ever knew. At the time of our visit a close male relative of his waited thus for his death. But, incredibly and strangely enough, this *one* soul did escape. A rescue had been planned by his adherents, the enemies of Abdul, and when he found himself in the water he swam quietly beneath it to the appointed spot where a boat had been manned to pick him up.

At the reception in Abdul's palace I had the great privilege of visiting his harem with the Sultan himself

as cicerone. Like the palace of Dolma Balché it was all gilt and gaudiness, ornate mirrors and cut-glass chandeliers, with curtains of French brocades or showy silks—a trial to the eyes and a torment to good taste. Objects of inlaid ivory and wood were beautiful, as were the huge receptacles of embossed brass in which incense was burned or charcoal to furnish heat. But on the whole the decorations were ugly and ostentatious.

The women of the harem, when not in negligée, were dressed in gorgeous French creations, some of the latest mode of fifteen or twenty years ago! All were much adorned with tawdry jewellery, their hair was oiled and perfumed and their nails coloured, though well kept. They wore very high-heeled shoes.

They were of all ages, but invariably stout, with the exception of some few young Circassian and Nubian girls with beautiful figures, the first having intense white, the others jet black skins, a most striking contrast. These wore either nothing or thin veils draped around them, leaving most of their bodies visible. They were the *fratra* or nobodies, yet to me by far the most beautiful of the harem inmates.

A rather plump, much ornamented and not especially attractive woman bridled self-consciously at our approach and the Sultan gravely introduced her to me. It was simple enough to gather from her spoiled-child manner that if she were not *the* favourite, she was at any rate high in her master's esteem. Close by crouched a beautiful Circassian, the black transparency of whose robe enhanced the dull cream white of her skin. The Sultan's hooked nose seemed to hook the more as his eyes narrowed in a smile at the lovely Circassian over

the shoulder of the *favorite en titre*, who was eagerly discussing Paris fashions with me. The girl's eyes filled with such humble yearning adoration as astonished me! Surely that exquisite creature could not be in love with this loathsome beast!

Slowly he approached her but my wandering attention must have warned the amply-fleshed lady, for she turned and sprang like a wildcat on the girl. The Sultan was too quick for her. Catching her arm, he motioned to the other to go. She fairly flew from the room and when she had disappeared Abdul released his panting Sultana, bowed suavely to me and we continued our tour.

Presently he gave me in charge of another huge person who spoke excellent French, telling her to remember that I was to be a welcome guest whenever I chose to visit the harem and adding with his hideous smile: "May Allah be praised if she can be induced to remain!" A tempting invitation! Sultan and harem have been gone these many years but as I sit on this shaded porch writing about them I can still feel the thrill of horror that shook me at the prospect.

I was overwhelmed with presents, Turkish ones; was treated—oh, misery!—to a rose-leaf marmalade, the most sickeningly sweet stuff I have ever tasted. They danced for me, they sang for me, and finally wanted to keep me with them.

I had admired the *meshrebiyas*, the wooden screens at the windows, and to my surprise and delight seven of these were sent to me by the Sultan at the request of his ladies. Several of them I still have in my living room and parlour.

A week later I returned to the harem and was wel-

comed enthusiastically by my large cicerone. I looked curiously about for the participants in last week's drama and, seeing neither of them, asked:

"Where is the beautiful favourite whom I saw when I was here before?"

"Oh," she replied pleasantly, "she is dead. The Circassian slave strangled her as she came from the Sultan's call."

Strangled her! That slip of a girl to strangle the mass of flesh that had been the favourite!

"But why?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Jealousy. What else?" She smiled curiously. "She had her reward." And then she told me the story.

The Sultan, passing through the harem to make a second selection, arrived just as the victim was gasping out her last breath. The Circassian stood transfixed against the central column, her eyes blazing, her breast heaving, unbelievably beautiful in the glow of her unrestrained passions.

Taking the situation in at a glance, he grinned horribly. All vicious impulses appealed to him unless they were directed against himself, and this was particularly charming because it was a tribute to him, the all-mighty, the irresistible. She must be punished, of course—discipline, alas, must be maintained! But that night should be hers. She should be the chosen one. He led her away.

"Where is she now?" I asked, fascinated. "I should like to see her."

"See her! How? Where? She is dead!"

"Dead too!"

"To be sure. When we went for our boat ride the

next day the orders were that she was not to return." An expressive gesture told the rest.

I gazed in incredulous amazement at the ponderous creature, placidly unaware of the sensation she had created. The atmosphere of the place suddenly choked me; the walls seemed to close in and unimaginable horrors to leer from the corners. Making my adieus without more ceremony, I fled in a very panic of terror and disgust.

The next day we left for Austria. Our engine broke down when we arrived at Rustchuk before we crossed the bridge over the Danube. We were told that we should have to spend the night there. It was bitter cold. There were no sleepers on that train; we were to find those at Giurgevo. Our alternatives were to sleep in the cars or outside. I accepted the sheepskin sack with the fur turned inside out which one of the natives offered me and made myself as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. My husband refused this accommodation and froze, but another engine was procured about three hours later and we resumed our journey.

Oh, dear Lord! the expression on Herbert's face was worth seeing when we were told that we had left Rustchuk in so great a hurry because there had been an outbreak of smallpox among the natives. The poor man reached Vienna in a state of high fever, searching his face for spots. The doctors had great difficulty in persuading him that he had not contracted the disease and he passed several days shut up in his rooms, refusing to see any one.

Our arrival in Vienna had been heralded from Paris and Constantinople.

Prince de Metternich, who had been in Paris so long with the Princess during the Second Empire, was an intimate friend of my parents. The Princess, wonderfully learned and intelligent, was perhaps equally ugly, with thick lips, a broad mouth that showed no pretty teeth, a short stub nose, but brilliant eyes. She was here in Vienna, as she had been at the court of Napoleon III, a type and a power. Her fad was to smoke, anywhere, big black cigars and just as I had smoked my first cigarette in public at the French Embassy in Constantinople under the guidance of the Marquise de Noailles, so I smoked my first cigar at Princess Pauline's instigation in her salon in Vienna, and I liked it.

Her exquisite daughter Pasqualine was quite different, being of a retiring and diffident disposition. She married Prince Lichtenstein, was very unhappy and a few years later killed herself. Sweet, devoted and sensitive, she was a singular contrast to her mother. She could not endure the revelations of her consort's life. Another might have retaliated, left him or killed him, but not Pasqualine; she killed herself.

Prince Metternich and the Princess arranged a continuous round of sightseeing and fêtes to greet the *jeune ménage*. As a matter of fact, the *jeune ménage* was going from bad to worse. We had been differently reared, we had not one taste in common, we were strangers to each other and desired nothing better. From our wedding day to our arrival in Vienna I had found in marriage only these advantages. I was able to think and speak freely, to come and go and dress as I liked. My husband was in constant, morbid anxiety about his health. "Oh, let's go away from here," was his constant cry. "When shall we ever be at the end of

HER SERENE HIGHNESS, PRINCESS PAULINE METTERNICH.

THE AUTHOR ON HER HONEYMOON.

this abominable trip! Whoever was so foolish as to invent a wedding journey! It takes you away from your habits, your comfort, your club. When shall we ever be in Paris again?" And I for my part, indifferent to him from the beginning and finding him more and more distasteful and alien to all my sympathies, decided to enjoy myself without him and flirted outrageously. Suppressed and denied the normal gratification of pleasure throughout my girlhood, my sudden and complete freedom went to my head. Neither of us tried to diminish the breach—how could we?—nor did we seek to enlarge it—why should we? Habit did that for us soon enough. His goal was Paris, mine to get as much pleasure and excitement out of life as it had to give.

Herbert positively refused to leave our hotel until he felt that all danger of the malady to which he had been exposed had disappeared. I went alone to the dinner given in our honour, a gorgeous affair to which *tout Vienne* had been asked. Archduke Rudolf, his wife Stephanie of Belgium, and the Archduke Franz Ferdinand—the two heirs to the throne whose lives were to end so tragically—were there.

After dinner there was dancing. Never had I known such enchantment. Waltzing the twostep was bliss when danced with those Austrians, and dance I did for the sheer love of it, the exhilarating intoxicating pleasure it gave me. To be sure, I should have given some time to the ladies, played the social game with them. But I flung caution to the winds and did nothing but dance, dance, dance, first and last.

This was really a revelation to me—a little what it would be for a girl who had never touched wine until

she was grown to be given a glass of cool water and brandy to quench a violent thirst. Champagne or soda with the brandy makes it difficult to swallow a large draught and the effect is lost; but cool water, even if heavily doctored with brandy, is easily swallowed and the after effects are delightful. I can trace all my wildest taste for pleasure to Vienna and its balls.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand took me under his wing and, as he was a handsome officer and an excellent dancer, I enjoyed his attentions. I gave myself a free hand in this ardent and whirlwind flirtation and the little red tongue of evil began to wag. Swept off my feet by his Hussar-like love-making and frankly delighted with his homage, I neither knew nor cared that gossip was linking the two "great scandals" that threatened the peace of the Austrian court.

One evening at a concert at Princess Metternich's the Archduke took me into a private nook in the Princess's den and pointed out to me Rudolf and Marie Vetsera (the other scandal) far away in the conservatory, quite alone. Rudolf was putting some question with feverish insistence, finally dropping on his knees, his face in her lap. A moment elapsed; then, rising, she curtsied her departure. But he caught her in a long embrace. Again he pleaded and at last she bowed her assent. They moved out of sight.

Franz Ferdinand told me then that dramatic love story that all the world knows now—how passionately they loved and how the marriage that had been forced on him to a princess without beauty, spirit or dignity had warped his life; how she had been jealous at a time when there was no reason for jealousy; how her pettiness, her vanity, her egotistic prudery had been in such

depressing contrast with the charm of his own beautiful mother and had clashed with the ideas fostered in him by the atmosphere of the lax Austrian court; how he had chafed at the boredom of his married life until he had met Marie here at this very place, since when she had become his life, his *raison d'être;* how he had urged the Emperor to allow him to renounce the throne, to renounce everything but Marie; how he had even written to Pope Leo a letter that will always remain the heartrending cry of love for its mate—all in vain.

I was deeply interested in his recital and absorbed in my pitiful thoughts of Rudolf and Marie when I was startled to feel the Archduke's arms tight about me and his kisses raining on my face and lips and neck. I fought for breath, this was too much! Releasing the hand that held my ostrich feather fan, I forced it between his face and mine. "Monseigneur, monseigneur, monseigneur, lâchez moi! Don't spoil everything!" I was crying with rage and bit him as hard as I could on his cheek near the chin. He let me go and I fell back on the sofa. He put his handkerchief to his face, from which it came away blood-stained, bowed very low with the customary clicking of the heels and said, smiling: "You win to-day, my beautiful fury, but I claim glory for the vanquished." He led me back to the concert room and left me with the Princess Metternich. Feeling the need of advice and that I could put my trust in her, I asked to be received the next day. She understood and bade my husband come with me to luncheon, asking me to come earlier that we might talk.

I was there long before lunch time. She was sweet and sympathetic and I told her everything, from my aunt's revelations of the married state to the previous

night's climax. She found the Archduke's attentions "adorable." "You ought to be delighted, my dear. With the exception of Rudolf he is the most important person at court. Shame on you for biting such a handsome lover, especially when he is an Archduke!"

She advised me not to resent his attentions in future. If I did and he proceeded to ignore me, the court would be pleased and my social downfall assured. She raged against my husband. Puffing vigorously at her immense black cigar, she exclaimed: "Married three months and not his wife yet! If it were not so pitifully sad, it would be grotesque. If I were in your place I should certainly accept from Franz the honour of the brush. C'est trop fort! What a fool Herbert is anyway!"

After luncheon she called me to her before I left, bidding my husband remain awhile to try one of her cigars. "Be careful," she said to me. "The court ball is tomorrow. You must be its star. If you turn a cold shoulder on the Archduke, you will not only do a foolish thing, but you will practically announce to the world what has happened and lose your advantage. Believe me, I know. Do as I tell you. Dazzle them all with your success." Her advice pleased me and I promised to meditate upon it. As I left I heard her say to my husband: "And now, my dear Count, à nous deux."

Later when he came back to the hotel he was in a boiling rage. The Princess had lectured him severely and ever after that he called her "ce dragon." "Ce n'est pas une femme—c'est un dragon! And those cigars! A tambour major couldn't smoke them." Henceforth he grew more surly than ever, refusing to go to the court ball because he would not wear knee breeches. He would go to the Jockey Club and play

bézique—a pastime which lost him three fortunes. "I will go nowhere, neither to the dragon nor anywhere else so long as we remain in this horrible place."

Princess Metternich had told me of the extreme elegance and wonderful jewels that would be displayed at the court ball and, not having the family jewels at my disposal, I thought I should make some effect by exaggerating in the other direction and, except for my pearl earrings, I wore not one jewel. A white tulle dress touching the ground, low-necked with very short sleeves, and a crown, well-tipped on my forehead, of natural Maréchal Niel yellow roses. As a train was *de rigueur* to enter and make one's bow to the royal hosts, I had a silver train lined with dull yellow satin attached to my shoulders and carried my huge fan of white ostrich feathers, repaired since its disastrous adventure at Princess Metternich's concert.

The settings were magnificent and the military uniforms—especially the white and gold of the Hussars—dazzling. Only at the court ball in the Palais de Glaces at St. Petersburg have I seen such splendour and there the individuality and spirit of the Vienna court were lacking. Empress Elizabeth appeared for a moment and I was duly presented. Her luxuriant hair fell loose on her shoulders and she wore a white velvet gown, unadorned save for the diamonds and emeralds that covered her shoulders and bodice. With her deep, lustrous brown eyes, her large sweet mouth, her exquisite grace and charm, what a lovely creature she was!

The emperor reminded me of my father, though he was older. His moustache was grey, as were his *favoris*, his eyes twinkled mischievously and his gestures were rapid, almost brusque.

After the presentation ceremonies were over and my cousin, Prince Paar (who was my cavalier in lieu of my husband) had delivered me of my court train and was returning to claim a dance, I was suddenly aware of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand bowing his greetings at my elbow and saying to Paar: "Prince, you had better seek another partner. The countess has given me the honour of this dance." I protested that it was Paar's dance but Franz Ferdinand was his superior officer and he bowed himself away. The Archduke, delighted with his ruse, showed me my dance card where he had placed his name opposite every number. I was annoyed, but I was vain too of my success and had no desire to jeopardise it. After a moment's reflection I decided to be agreeable to this exasperating tyrant.

We walked out of the room together. Presently he offered me his arm and as the strains of that exquisite valse, *Amoureuse*, became audible, the intoxication of the rhythm took possession of us and, dreamily almost, we began to waltz, forgetful of everything but the delight of our perfectly matched steps. Again and again we danced; he made no reference to our former encounter except to remark that my fan had better weathered the storm of that night than his chin which still bore the marks of my teeth. He suddenly asked me how much longer I should be in Vienna.

"Only two or three days more."

"Oh, I shall see you in Paris then. I go hunting with Rudy and Philip early in the morning. Look at his wife, how she stands watching him like a hawk. Poor fellow! He needs a holiday away from her and I shall be his chaperon."

I laughed and told him what I thought of his chaperonage.

"Well, we shall see," he answered. "And in Paris I shall have my revenge on you, ma belle enchanteresse."

That gave me breathing time and I danced with him freely, joyfully, till daylight.

But I saw the Archduke once or twice again before I left Vienna. I could not help meditating on the complete transformation that a few months had wrought. I thought of the sickening hardships of my childhood, of the humiliations to which my mother had subjected me, of the thousand and one miseries I had had to face. And now!—showered with all that the dazzling world had to offer—admired, courted, sought after! I see those triumphs now as the frothy bubbles they were, but my present clear-sightedness made them no less delicious at the time.

CHAPTER VI

"Mon Petit Mari"

A FEW more days of fête and whirl in which my husband joined me occasionally, then we returned to Paris and my life with my new family began.

That house in the Faubourg St. Germain I grew to loathe as a prison. The grandparents lived in huge, high-ceilinged rooms on the ground floor, my husband's parents on the floor above, and Herbert and I had our rooms on the top floor. It was a large house, between court and garden, bare and desolate, as was the sensation that held me in its grip once the big porte-cochère had closed on me. It was as though I felt myself seized in the grasp of something powerful that would choke all youth and gaiety out of me. It terrified me and I fled from it as often as possible.

My handsome father-in-law I liked as he did me. He was a gentle soul, lacking decision, completely dominated—as were her children—by my mother-in-law's force of character and immense fortune, over which she always kept close control. She was not of equal rank with her husband, having belonged merely to *la noblesse des robes* by right of her father's presidency of the Court of Appeals.

She was a thoroughly unpleasant woman—I have never heard that point disputed—with obnoxious personal habits. She had delightfully pretty hands and feet—inherited by my husband—and snappy black eyes, but her skin was greasy and yellow and rarely washed

of consideration for her health, and her lips were thin and tightly pinched. She went to the best dressmakers in Paris and always looked unkempt, her clothes held together in some fashion by pins, her oily hair, never properly combed, hanging on one side of her head and an empty net on the other. She was extremely intelligent, well versed in law, and wrote with some ability. She took considerable pride in her rôle of *femme de lettres* and it was her delight to entertain her guests by reading them some interminable drama or engaging a troupe of actors to interpret one of her comedies.

Her attitude toward me was complex. I was good-tempered and understood and humoured her freaks. She took advantage of my intellectual sympathy though I believe she hated me instinctively as an intruder. In those early days she allied herself with me against her son: "Will he never stop gambling?" she would cry. "Why don't you use your influence with him? (Influence, indeed!) Take him with you where he *can't* gamble." But later it was I who was to blame, my follies that were at the root of all our trouble. I have no doubt they did their part.

She would now and then permit herself to trespass gleefully on the forbidden ground of romance and adventure, urging me to tell her stories of my gay activities. Then, wrapping herself in frigidity, she would stop me suddenly: "Enough of this foolery. I only wanted to see how far you would go. One day you will go too far." I soon learned to watch for and avoid that trap.

I never read except at night before I went to sleep. I dashed feverishly from one appointment to another

and filled in the gaps with long telephone conversations. One day my maid had dressed me for dinner and I reached for my cloak.

"But, madame," said Clothilde (the same name as my mother's maid but a very different person), "it is not yet time. There are still seventeen minutes before you need go."

"Seventeen minutes," I wailed, "seventeen minutes! But, great Heaven, Clothilde, what shall I *do* with seventeen minutes!"

Not long after our return the Prince and Princess de Leon, my husband's cousins, gave a ball in our honour. My husband asked me to leave him at the Jockey Club on our way to the ball, promising to join me later. The carriage was ordered for 4 A.M.

I had just left my wraps in the hands of the footman and was going slowly up the grand stairway with its unique banister of forged iron, when something impelled me to look down and my heart leaped to see uplifted toward me the face of Fitz James, my cousin, *mon petit mari*. He came closer and, without a word of greeting, said simply: "How could you?"

I flared up indignantly: "Could what?"

"Marry," was the answer. "Marry some one else after you had promised me."

I bent toward him over the banister. "My mother told me that you had forgotten me and were going to marry another."

"I have never forgotten you, never intended to marry any one but you and never will." He put his hands over mine and spoke in a tone that he knew only too well how to use.

To describe the sickening surge of tenderness and

despair that overwhelmed me at this revelation is beyond my power. I could say nothing but my eyes must have told him much.

We paid our respects to our hosts and then retired to a corner where again and again we rehearsed the details of the years that had separated us. Three years before, while he was still in Africa, his parents had lost their fortune and my parents, learning of it, had put an end to the engagement.

For the first time the most alluring waltz music played for me in vain. I sat chained to my seat while he talked on and the hours flew. My husband did not appear and when the carriage came I went home alone with a heavy heart. *He* had been waiting for me all the time and it was I who had taken the step which separated us from each other and from happiness. God, it was hard to bear!

But, as was my wont, I gathered what crumbs were left. The Count was evermore at his club or at the races and I had all the time possible to myself. I spent it with Fitz James, riding, driving, at theatres and balls. The more I saw of him, the more deeply did I fall under his spell and it was not long before I realised that I was sliding down a very dangerous hill. Our meetings attracted notice and comment. Gossips wagged their tongues and our names began to be linked in every quarter. I knew that the situation must be put within bounds.

Little as I cared then or at any time for the opinion of the world I did not for a moment harbour the thought of breaking my marriage bonds. True, I did not love my husband nor he me. But we had not reached that point where separation or divorce would have been easy

to contemplate. No, the only thing for me to do was to place myself out of Fitz James's reach definitely and finally, and having given the problem deep thought, I hit upon a plan.

I told him frankly that I loved him as he professed to love me but that I was married and, if we were to go on seeing one another as friends should, he must marry too so that we should both be safe. A little friend of mine was madly in love with him and only too willing to say yes if he would ask her to be his wife.

A fool's plan, I saw later, but not then. Then I was pleased with myself and my sagacity.

It was difficult to persuade Fitz James. But when he saw that I was resolute he agreed to the marriage on one condition. He would do his honest best to make it a success but if conditions for either of us should become unbearable, if—each having done his utmost—the result should be failure, then I must promise him that I should leave my husband and go to him. This promise I made in good faith, with no thought in my mind but to deal honourably by my husband, my lover and my own standards of fair play. As a matter of fact, I put my trust in Vivien. Knowing as I did the strength of her passion for my cousin, her joy in his possession and her determination to retain it, I felt secure. It was a strange situation. I counted on her to keep us apart and felt relief in shifting my burden to her shoulders.

Our parting act, his and mine, on his wedding morning was to go to an early mass where we made a final solemn surrender of one another.

The civil marriage took place at eleven o'clock and at noon the church of St. Germain l'Auxerrois saw them

consecrated man and wife. Our circle was baffled. I was the object of as many curious glances as the bride and groom. They could not fathom the depths of this situation. If they could have read my miserable heart as I congratulated Fitz James in the sacristy of the church and received Vivien's kiss and murmured thanks for having brought her marriage about, they would have been duly edified.

I had had enough and too much. Back in my bare, lonely prison I sobbed my heart out.

How empty and dull were the days that followed! The routine was the same but there was no longer the dear anticipation of possible meetings. All was stupid and commonplace and without meaning.

But I had made up my mind that there should be no half way measures. Having renounced my cousin to salvage my married life I would bend all my efforts in the same direction. What could I do to lessen the ever-widening breach with my husband? I found not much.

The club was his home, gambling his life. He rose late, lunched with his parents and me, was off to the races when there were any, came home to dress for dinner, if he did not dress at the Jockey Club to dine there or elsewhere, and returned late at night or early in the morning, from where I did not know and cared still less.

But if I did not care, I resolved that I must act as though I did. I went to the races with him though he made it quite clear that my company added nothing to his pleasure. I asked him to share my pursuits, to go driving with me: "People will think we are estranged if we are not seen together."

"Why do you want to change things?" he would cry impatiently. "Aren't you satisfied as you are?" Heaven

knows I was not, and I was sometimes seized with an impulse to tell him why. I doubt whether it would have made much difference to him.

"Let us stay home to-night and play bézique," I suggested once, "or ask your mother to read us one of her plays."

The look of horror with which he regarded me was one of the funniest things I have ever seen, and I burst into hysterical laughter. I believe he thought that I had gone quite mad.

I heard occasionally from Vivien who, with her husband, was in garrison at Tours or at her country place. She asked us there again and again, writing at first to say how happy she was and that she wished us to see her happiness. I could not suppress a sharp pang of pain as I read these words though I tried to persuade myself that I was pleased. One day I received a note, saying simply: "Please come. I am so unhappy." I thought I knew what that meant and that compliance with her request would do nothing to lessen her unhappiness. So I wrote to her as honestly as I could a letter which seemed to me full of sage advice. But I did not go.

Unsettled and disheartened myself, as alone in the world as if it contained not another soul, I crammed my hours so full as to give myself no time for thought and to exhaust my body so that I could sleep at night. As a dutiful daughter-in-law I generally went to early mass with my elders, then had breakfast, after which came a fencing lesson, and with a douche and massage a good part of the morning had gone. An hour's drive in the Bois de Boulogne, or a walk up and down the Avenue des Acacias, lunch at the prison, a dreary half hour with my mother-in-law, my husband pulling out his watch every

few minutes. As soon as possible we fled, he to the races, the club or wherever his fancy led him, I to a theatre, concert, lecture or hospital where I went three times a week to learn what I could of life. Then a drive in the Bois, a few dismal society calls, some shopping, dinner at home or out, the opera, theatre, even—oh, shocking! —the *Chat Noir*. Anything was better than staying at home.

In the winter there were receptions and balls.

I hated to try on clothes and endured the penance once at Creed's for tailored dresses, once at Doucet's and Worth's for street and evening gowns, once at Paquin's for negligées and *fantaisies*. After that I was satisfied to let the mannequins try on my dresses. But hats were quite a different story. I am ashamed to say that I was at Virot's two or three times a week. I would gaze at those adorable hats, put them on, look at myself in the three-panelled mirror and cry: "Send me this one, that one, the other,"—six or even a dozen. I was shameless in my greediness for hats.

On a certain cold evening in early June I was going to a *contrat de mariage* party, and instead of the filmy lace dress my maid had laid ready I took it into my head to wear a red velvet, laced in the back, quite plain and tightly fitting. I had not worn the dress for months but I could not understand why I had so much difficulty in getting it on.

The next day it was still very cold and, coming back in the victoria from my usual five o'clock drive in the Bois, we were stopped by some obstruction at the Pont de la Concorde. I felt cold in spite of my big zibeline cape, and decided to walk across the bridge rather than wait any longer and to let the carriage go round by

another way and join me on the other side. I had barely passed the middle of the bridge when I saw a woman on the *berge* some distance away throw up her hands and fall face forward into the Seine. I threw off my cape and over the parapet I went, caught the woman some distance below the bridge—the current runs swiftly at this point—and held her firmly. Two men in a boat came to our rescue, and a crowd gathered to greet us.

Arriving home, I dressed in a hurry but was late for dinner and was received with a very cold and formal: "Vous arrivez bien tard, que vous est-il advenu." I excused myself but did not explain, having no desire to be taken to task for my folly. I developed a high fever that night, however, and with the doctor's visit learned that I was to give birth to a child in a few months.

The next day sensational stories appeared in all the papers. Some would have it that I had tried to take my life by jumping into the Seine, having taken the precaution to send my carriage away first. Others trumpeted the rescue as a deed of heroism; neither was accurate.

Two days was all I could stand of being doctored and when I was well enough I called at the hospital to see my little desperate piece of humanity. She had given birth the morning after her attempted suicide to a dead child and wanted only to die herself, since she had discovered that her fiancé had two wives and was raising two families. I did what I could to relieve her and for a long time after she stayed at the hospital in one capacity or another.

CHAPTER VII

My Son's Birth.—Social Activities

MY husband was away at a shooting party in France that first of October when, after fifteen hours of agony, a son was born at Argenteau and my duty to the family accomplished. An absurd little incident lightened my spirits a little. A few hours after the birth of my son I declared to the doctor that I was hungry and he as positively declared that I might not eat a thing until the next day, and then only a few oysters. At eight o'clock when everyone was at dinner, my little boy in his cradle, the collie Royal reconciled to the newcomer, a tray of chicken, oysters and a pint of Mumm's was brought up for the nurse. I had a brilliant idea. I hastily wrote and folded a note and asked her to take it to my father at once and to wait for the reply. I knew he was at dinner and the note was really only a telegram of congratulations received from my husband's people, to which I had added a few words. She demurred, saying she would like to eat her dinner but I began to fret (which I knew was not permitted) and to soothe me the poor dear soul went off with the note. The door had barely closed when I was at the tray, devouring chicken, oysters and finally the pint of champagne. I regarded Royal apologetically as I gave him the bones for it was he, poor fellow, who was to bear the blame. Pulling the tablecloth with all its contents down to the floor, I jumped into bed just in time to avoid being caught. The

noise of the crash set the baby crying and when nurse came in I was awaking from a brief nap.

The next morning the doctor said: "You see how nicely you are getting along. Now if you had eaten anything last night—" and decided that I might have three oysters and a little coffee. What a menu! I could not control my mirth and told him the whole disgraceful story, to his horror and my mother's disgust.

The baby's nurse had been chosen by my mother-in-law and came armed with certificates from mayor and clergy. But after I was up and about and the little fellow had been baptised in the chapel of the château, it was evident that something was wrong. My mother did not approve of my lack of formality with my servants. She said that it bred strange ideas in them, which undermined the discipline of her own household and consequently the *nourrice* and my maid were sent for their meals to the little village inn. While they were gone I had the baby with me and soon noticed that he was peevish and restless and losing weight. The doctor came to examine child and nurse and brought me the news that the paragon was about to become a mother. Then I determined to take matters into my own hands.

I did not bother with references from priests or mayors. I asked for a healthy woman with lots of milk and good milk. A cow or a goat would have done as well. Who could have excelled my own Nanny! Not a week after Emilie Rousseau arrived the little fellow was himself again; but my mother-in-law raged and never forgave me for having dismissed her nurse. She was convinced that the reason I gave her was a manufactured one; *un tas d'histoires*, she called it.

My husband had arrived three days after the baby's

birth and difficulties had arisen between him and my parents over money settlements. The marriage contract had provided that twenty-five thousand francs a year should be settled on each of us by our families. My husband's family had fulfilled its share of the obligation but my portion had not yet been paid. My parents now proposed to turn over to me their Paris house in the Rue de l'Elysée at a valuation of four hundred thousand francs. All the old furniture and *objets d'art* had been removed and, apart from the possible difficulty in selling it, that the house itself was worth the figure placed on it was doubtful. My husband thought not and I was inclined to agree with him.

Bitter words were exchanged and the situation became acute. Herbert, once convinced of the futility of his opposition, announced in a rage his immediate departure for Paris. My father turned to me.

"Are you with him or with us? If you are on our side, stay with us and the boy at Argenteau. If not, go back to Paris with your husband."

As a matter of fact, I was on neither side. Any feeling of partisanship for my husband was impossible. On the other hand, I did believe that my parents had acted unfairly. But it was for Paris that I decided—gay, brilliant, beautiful Paris whose call I understood and heeded. To exchange all that glittering excitement for an uneventful existence at Argenteau under my parents' severe rule! Unthinkable!

My decision was received in cold silence and I returned that night with my husband and son to Paris.

Antoine was a healthy little fellow and the nurse whose coming had caused such an uproar proved perfection. I loved the baby dearly but it never would have occurred

to me to give him any of my time. I would run into the nursery to delight for a moment in his sweetness, to hold him in my arms before taking myself off to one important engagement or another. But to give real thought or energy or devotion to anything but his physical welfare! No, that was not in the plan.

My business was to hurl myself into the maelstrom of the Paris season which was particularly gay that year. One of its most notorious events was the Princesse de Sagan's *bal des bêtes*, given in the palace of the Rue St. Dominique, a magnificent if somewhat decadent affair. It was a mad display! Animals of all kinds, some hideously realistic, hogs and gorillas (in costume and out); others charmingly piquant, ducks and drakes, sheep and donkeys, red macaws and golden pheasants and birds of paradise. One of its prettiest conceptions was the entry *en masse* of twenty-four French poodles, twelve white and twelve black, walking together on their hind legs, the pink skin closely shaven, white woolly puffs, two on each rump, two on the legs, two on the tail, long ears flapping as they hopped along, a dangling cane in each front paw, a Beau Brummel monocle daintily screwed into each left eye. On each toupée, tied with a brightly coloured ribbon, a black silk hat rested at a rakish angle. They performed a succession of agile drills and complicated gymnastics which culminated in a really remarkable feat involving the use of rolling barrels. After bowing to tumultuous applause, they scattered to pay their homage to this or the other beauty who took their fancy.

The Princesse de Sagan was a resplendent peacock whose long tail swept the floor or rose in iridescent beauty behind her head, making a gorgeous background for her bright red hair. She was the daughter of an immensely

wealthy banker and very pretty. After she separated from her husband she indulged her really admirable taste for artistic effect and display by planning a succession of balls—splendid and bizarre. They came to an end only when there were bigger stakes to play. For some time she had been regarded askance—the more conservative of the dowagers had dropped her from their visiting lists, when her husband suffered at his club a stroke of paralysis. A light of triumph must have gleamed in her eye when she had him removed, speechless and helpless, from the club and carried home. There he stayed for the few poor remaining months of his life and from there he was buried. A strange reconciliation! But it served her purpose. The dowagers had been beaten. How ostracise a respectable married woman living respectably under the same roof with her husband!

I attended the *bal des bétes* as a panther—lithe and supple—leaping in on all fours in skin and spots. My tail was very much in the way—of others as well as myself. Finally I tucked it under my arm to dance a delightful waltz with a well-striped zebra. Most of the heavy, elaborate costumes grew so oppressive as the evening wore on that, after the midnight supper, many of us were unable to endure the torture any longer and changed to more conventional attire, retaining only our heads. The effect was in a way even more grotesque.

I remember the aftermath of another ball—the one to which I went in my Sappho costume with its black lace skirt and powdered curls and bicorn folly hat. By some mistake my carriage had not waited for me and, having stayed chatting long after everyone else had left, I found myself at 5:30 in the morning in the Avenue Kleber. I had slipped out unattended, sure that the coupé was at

hand, and did not like to go back. Since it was not, I hailed a *voiture de maraîchers*, a loaded vegetable wagon going to market, and asked the driver to take me along.

He grinned: "Montez, ma petite dame."

I climbed on top of the pile of sweet-scented carrots and turnips and it was so that dawn found me travelling slowly down the Champs Elysées, hugely enjoying the situation but praying that none of my acquaintances would see me. My prayer was not granted and this harmless, if undignified, escapade was one of the crimes most often and bitterly cited against me by my husband's people.

Another Paris street adventure some years later was more sinister. I had attended a *répétition générale* with some friends and this time had sent the carriage away, planning to go home with the Duchess Galleze. It was long past midnight when we assembled at the stage door of the theatre preparatory to going to supper.

"Where is your carriage, chérie?" the Duchess asked me. "I will ask you to take Monsieur X. with you."

A glance at the gentleman and I had decided.

"I sent my carriage back—"

He smiled. "We will take a sapin and be quite comfortable."

"Thank you," I answered. "I intend to use the car of a friend. I have a message to send and will join you later at Paillard's."

I hurried off but there was of course no car of a friend. And at that time and at that hour of the morning the section of Paris in which I found myself was desolate. No *sapin* was in sight and I decided to walk quickly the short distance to my hotel. At the other end of the

street the brightly lighted square between the Madeleine and the Rue Tronchet was plainly visible.

I was moving briskly along the narrow sidewalk when out of the dark shelter of an entry a figure darted and joined me. I quickened my pace.

"Pas si vite, ma petite dame." A hasty glance showed me an uncouth object that leered at me evilly. My heart thumped but I made no answer, trying to keep my head and use it at the same time. He grew ugly.

"If you won't come with a good grace I can soon quiet you with this," and he pulled out a short knife, releasing the spring so as to show me its wide, heavy blade. His right hand felt for my arm.

I thought: "If I scream no one will hear me. If I run he will catch and kill me. My only hope lies in time and to get to the lighted square near the Madeleine."

Aloud I said as I pulled myself free: "I like adventure. But where? And how?"

"Ici."

"No," I replied. "There is the market arcade on the other side of the light and there we shall be safe."

He agreed, making his approval manifest in a loathsome phrase. But just as we were passing into the Rue Tronchet a little *sapin* stopped so near us that my companion had to step back in order to avoid the horse.

"Montez, ma petite dame," called the cabby but I had not waited for his invitation. With one leap I was inside.

"Allez, cocher, allez vite, vite, vite."

I am sure he was drunk—that cabby—but he was my saviour none the less. Apparently he appreciated the situation and was delighted with the part he played. Sunk into the farthest corner of the cab I laughed in hysterical

relief as I heard him call after my erstwhile cavalier: "On te plante là, mon vieux. T'es pas joli, joli!" and other similar pleasantries until he was out of hearing.

We went to London for the jubilee festivities and on to Cowes where for seventeen days I never in the twenty-four hours went to bed or slept at all. It was swimming, driving, lunching, tennis, yachting, dining, bridge, dancing, one after the other, all night and day.

"You'll fade quickly at that game," warned one of my friends. But it seemed my natural element. I throve in it.

At the balls at Norris Castle and the Yacht Club were many of the personages about whom centred in later years world-stirring events—Crown Prince Frederick and his wife Victoria, Princess Royal of Great Britain and Ireland and elder sister of the Prince of Wales; Prince Wilhelm, their arrogant and disrespectful son who became war lord of his country and later a disgraced exile; Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the victim of Sarajevo; and Rudolf who should have been accompanied by his wife. But Stephanie chose to express her displeasure by sulking in Austria and leaving Rudolf and Marie free to continue the romance that ended in the scandal and shooting of Mayerling. I have never believed the explanation of that mystery that attributes the murder to the jealous guard who mistook Marie for his wife. I believe that Rudolf, convinced of the impossibility of a divorce from his wife, killed Marie and himself. Theirs was a genuine grand passion, they had no world but one another. But Marie was a soft, sensitive, truly religious soul, to whom extra-marital relations were abhorrent and since she could not face the world under a cloud, they probably sought death together as the only solution.

THE AUTHOR IN FANCY DRESS COSTUME.

THE AUTHOR ON THE PRINCE OF WALES'S YACHT
AT COWES.

The tent of the Prince of Wales in the gardens was the temple to which some were elected and if, from these dimly lit tête-à-têtes some passers-by turned away smiling discreetly, others were envious of the privilege and yet others very much shocked.

The last days were a whirlpool and on the little mail-boat on which I crossed the Channel I had my first sleep in seventeen days! From Calais a fast train to Paris, then Versailles and Mareil, the family country jail.

It was a very quiet life at Mareil and in those days I did not care for a quiet life at all. A few embers of the gay time at Cowes continued to glow, a few meetings here and there, a few letters exchanged.

I was an ardent horsewoman and rode very often along the *grand route* to Paris. I could not but notice that the path I frequented grew more and more populous though there were exactly eleven different roads branching out from the main avenue from Paris to Versailles. It was not an especially attractive path at that, except for these chance meetings, which were very pleasant, very amusing and spicy enough to bear repetition. When only one of the riders appeared and turned his horse to accompany mine, we took one of the pretty side paths, conducive to delightful if imprudent tête-à-têtes. But sometimes it happened that we met another traveler—occasionally even more than one. This was no longer fun.

Then something happened to put a full stop to this diversion of mine—something which to this day fills me with the keenest sorrow and regret. A duel was fought between two of my cavaliers; one was killed and the other wounded. If I was the cause of it, as I was given to understand, I was an unwitting cause. I had not knowingly given them any provocation for combat. But

it ended my rides in that direction. The price was too high to pay for an idle pastime.

The lonesome country life bored me to utter weariness but I determined to see it through and though we were but an hour from Paris, for one month I never went near the capital—an achievement worth noting. My husband (Marquis now, by the death of his grandfather) was unable to manage it. He skipped back and forth, refusing to spend even Sunday with us, which his mother and I divided between church-going and her receptions. Good heavens, it was terrible!

The bareness of those huge rooms, devoid of all ornament—no curtains, no carpets, no books! Never anywhere else have I seen such an arrangement of furniture, what little there was of it. At one end of the immense room was a magnificent fireplace, a masterpiece of the cabinet-maker's art. Starting from each side of it, facing each other, two rows of beautiful antique chairs, six in each row, stretching toward the middle of the room. A table across the end of the rows with bare passage space between it and the chairs. In the evening one lamp without a shade. This left an immense area bare and unoccupied. The arrangement was less comfortable than that of the old-fashioned trolley-cars I found in New York, where people sat next to one another with no dividing wooden arms between.

All the reception rooms were similarly furnished, or rather unfurnished. But the dining-room, in spite of its bareness, was given character by its fine old furniture and its gleaming, heavy silver.

The food we ate was as odd as the house and its furnishings. It was always too abundant: soup, entrée, fish, roast, a cold dish, two vegetables, cheese and dessert; but

its peculiarity was that it all tasted exactly the same, owing to the Duchess's strange fancy to have a *roux*, a brown butter sauce without salt or seasoning, covering every dish. This made the heavy culinary expenditure a total loss as bread and *roux* would have served the same purpose as far as flavour goes and been much cheaper.

Even the old duke, who rarely summoned the spirit to criticise anything, was stung to irritation by the appearance and re-appearance of this abominable sauce, and would cry in despair:

"Enfin pourquoi toujours ce roux? Pourquoi pas pour changer quelquefois une sauce blanche même?"

And her invariable reply: "Calmez vous, mon ami, calmez vous. Il n'y a pas de nutrition dans la sauce blanche mais le roux est fortifiant."

CHAPTER VIII

Gambling

I HAD barely returned to town, when a note was brought to me, signed with an unfamiliar name and requesting a private interview. To my request for an explanation of this unusual procedure, the footman brought back a scribbled reply, so urgent and unpleasant in tone that I decided to see the writer. Mr. Roberts came in and, after excusing himself for his insistence, gave me a paper which read:

"In thirty days I will pay to Blank eighty thousand francs," and was signed: M. A., Marquise d'Avaray.

I had never seen the note before, much less written or signed it. Very indignant I handed it back, saying:

"I know nothing at all about this."

We were facing each other. He took the paper and, returning it to the portfolio from which he had removed it, said with a peculiarly ugly smile:

"Alors très bien, on verra un Seigneur de l'ancien régime en prison pour faux."

Saluting, he turned to leave. My brain reeled as I began to grasp the meaning of the situation and that he meant every word he said.

"Please give the paper back to me a minute," I said as quietly as I could. "I want to look at it more carefully."

As I examined it I asked him how he had come by it. It was the final renewal of a dozen or more loans, each

of which had been paid by a larger one. But this note was a final summing up and had to be paid in full. It was then eleven days overdue. I perfectly understood and understood furthermore that I should have to pay, even if by so doing I seemed to admit that the note was mine. Thinking hard and quickly as I felt his eyes on me, I said:

"I am sorry it so completely escaped my memory. Please forgive me. I cannot pay you to-day, but if you will give me four days' grace, I will then take up the note."

Still smiling, he promised to wait the four days but no longer. I repeated with emphasis: "I will take up the note within four days."

It was the first time I had had to put on my thinking cap and the dear Lord knows that, though I have had it on many and many a time since, it has never become entirely comfortable. I did not know where my husband was that day. He was not in Paris. I did not want to speak of this to either of our families. I knew that his mother would give him no money for gambling debts. She did not consider a debt of honour a debt at all. "It is well for the winner to lose his ill-gotten gains," I had often heard her declare piously. His father had no money. As for my parents, I could see my father's shrug, my mother's triumphant smile. "Why come to us now? You have chosen him." Apply to friends? Never! There was none of whom I could be sure and I would not risk a refusal. The *haute finance* was a possibility but I was not anxious to place myself in their greedy hands nor to incur obligations which I might be expected to pay with invitations to my home. Yet it was a criminal offence that my husband had committed, and I had not

yet reached the point where I could see him go to prison for want of an effort from me to keep him out.

I had my midday meal *en tête-à-tête* with my mother-in-law. Then I took a *fiacre* and went to Notre Dame des Victoires, and from there for a long, long drive to the Park of Vincennes. I was thinking, thinking, thinking and as the result of my thought I directed the driver to the nearest telegraph office and wired to the Prince of Wales that I should be in London at the Berkeley Hotel the next morning on a life and death mission and begged him to grant me an audience. The Prince had been my mother's staunch friend and had known and liked me from childhood. I was sure that for the sake of the family and the name, if not for my own sake and my mother's, somehow he would suggest a way to bring relief.

I went home, told my maid to pack a valise and, leaving a line to my mother-in-law to say that I was going to friends for forty-eight hours, I departed. I stopped at the Jockey Club to see Constantin Le Gonidec, my good old friend who was himself a gambler, and to tell him that for all who asked I was at his country place for two days and that he was to give his wife the same information. He grinned, thinking naturally that things were as they were not. But I had neither the inclination nor the power to set him right.

Next morning, very hungry on arriving at the Berkeley at six o'clock, I gave the waiter an order for some buttered toast, strong tea and "six nice big fat skippers; hurry, please." He vanished and a few minutes later a solemn butler came with a letter on a tray. While I was busy with the letter, an answer from the Prince saying he would be there at one, the butler asked gravely whether I would kindly repeat my breakfast order.

"Six well-broiled skippers," I said impatiently.

"Oh, kippers," he exclaimed in relief.

"Well, kippers, skippers, it's all the same, isn't it? Little salty fish like herring, only nicer."

I thought the man a fool, and I was sure he thought me one. But the respectability of the hotel was saved, which must have relieved his soul considerably.

Sir Stanley Clark came at eleven and with his help I arranged the menu for His Royal Highness, who arrived at one with his equerry. After luncheon the two gentlemen left and I told the Prince my story. He had never liked my husband, disapproving vigorously of his neglect of social obligations, and as I talked I realised that I had a sympathetic audience.

He fondled his short beard as was his habit in a thoughtful mood and when I had finished there was a long pause. Finally he said: "You remember Mr. L. who came to tea here with us and Mrs. K. about a year ago?"

I remembered him very well indeed and reminded the Prince that I had met him not only at tea but on his yacht at Cowes and on several other occasions at dinner or the theatre.

"If he understands how closely I have the matter at heart," he continued, "I think he will be glad to help effectively where I can only wish to. The Queen finds I spend too much," smiling. Then, with a sly glance at me and laughing outright, "I am, I must confess, always short. And now I must go. You will hear from me later in the day."

At six I received a letter from His Royal Highness, enclosing Mr. L.'s check for the necessary amount and telling me how graciously the service had been rendered.

Relieved and grateful to tears, I sent them each a note of thanks and made my preparations to depart from London. Years later I was able to give a more substantial evidence of my gratitude to Mr. L. by suggesting his name to the Prince of Wales as a possible endower of the enterprise which the Princess of Wales had at heart—the creation throughout London of luncheon-tearooms for working girls where they might eat inexpensively and well. My suggestion materialised, the tearooms were established and Mr. L. was knighted, since when that genial Irish sportsman has made himself beloved and honoured on two continents for his ability to be a good loser.

I arrived in Paris at eight the next morning, glad of course to have succeeded but low-spirited as I reflected on the disagreeableness of the situation. I breakfasted at the station while waiting for the banks to open, then drew eighty bills of a thousand francs each and lost no time in taking them to Mr. Roberts's office. He was astonished but promptly handed me the note and watched as I burned it with the same match that lit my cigarette.

My husband returned that day in evil spirits and things were altogether detestable. I felt for him only contempt and had no wish to inform him of my activities in his behalf. It was opera night but he declined to go. I stayed at home, preferring even the Duchess's company to any gaiety that evening. Herbert returned very late and, to avoid going by the passageway directly over his mother's bedroom at the risk of waking her, he passed through my chamber to his. He knocked something over, making a loud noise, and swore violently at me, my room and everything in it. I was myself in no humour for conciliatory tactics and said sharply: "If you use this room only as a passage to yours, pray go the other way."

"Par Dieu, it is surely the last time I go through your room," he exclaimed with another oath and, banging the door between us, he locked it.

I jumped up and cried, my fingers on the lock: "Please repeat."

He did with emphasis. I answered, bolting my side: "Ici de même."

The door was never opened again. But we had meant so little to one another that it marked rather a change in our mental attitudes than any difference in our way of life.

A few days later I was told that my husband was again gambling heavily. I made up my mind to speak to him. I had some difficulty in managing a tête-à-tête since we did not meet or speak except in his parents' presence. But one morning I watched for him to leave his room and asked him if what I had heard was true. He replied that it was none of my damned business.

"Oh, yes, it is very much my business," I answered coldly. "I will never again pay any gambling debts of yours, so you had better avoid making notes of obligations in my name."

"Notes! In your name! What are you talking about? Have you gone mad?"

"Perhaps. And perhaps Roberts too has gone mad. But until I redeemed it he held a note of yours signed in my name for eighty thousand francs."

He looked at me in such evident bewilderment that I began to doubt my own senses. "A note for eighty thousand francs—yes—but in my own name, not yours. If you have paid it"—with a laugh—"well—so much the better. Roberts is cleverer than I thought."

Slowly it dawned on me that I had been duped and a subsequent interview with the suave Roberts convinced me that I had no choice but to swallow the pill, bitter taste and all.

"It is regrettable, madame, but one must live. A trick—yes—but a justifiable one to get back what belonged to us. The Marquis would not pay. We might have sued but we preferred the money—as quickly as possible. There would always have been time to sue"—he smiled—"if the trick had failed. The loan, you see, was obtained under false pretences. Instead of going to pay old debts it was used to make new ones. And to borrow money under false pretences is an offence punishable by law."

I was furiously angry and yet I could not suppress a thrill of admiration for the smooth cleverness of this usurer. "My compliments, monsieur," I told him and he acknowledged them with a sweeping bow as he showed me out.

Paris suddenly lost its savour. Loneliness and a sense of futility overwhelmed me. I felt a horror of my husband and his mother and my dreary home. Every time those heavy bronze doors clanged behind me I shuddered. Even the endless round of parties grew flat and tasteless. In this mood the thought of Argenteau came to me like a benediction—lovely Argenteau with its green fields and its peace. I remembered that my mother was in Russia. She had been one of the first to recognise and applaud the genius of the new Russian music of which Rimsky-Korsakoff and Borodin and César Cui were the principal exponents. She had even gone so far as to learn Russian in order to make communication with her artist friends simpler, and she paid

frequent visits to their country to bask in the atmosphere she loved.

With my mother away it seemed to me possible that I might persuade my father to receive me. I wrote him an affectionate letter, telling him that I was lonely and unhappy and saying that I should like to come with my son to Argenteau. His reply was not without tenderness, but he told me that my mother was away, that my husband and I had taken sides against him and that he could receive us only together and at our joint request. Even this he could not do before my mother's return.

The very next afternoon came a telegram from Fitz James: "Suis trop malheureux venez" and named a meeting place.

I smiled a little cynically as I read it though my heart sang. It seemed to me that the fates were conspiring with my family to simplify my course. Abandoned by my parents—though I knew that they would say I had abandoned them—and completely alienated from my husband, why should I not go to the man who I was sure loved me as I did him? A mad impulse to fling everything to the winds and take the decisive step then and there was checked by the sudden thought of my son.

I sent Fitz James a *petit bleu*, telling him to come to tea at five that evening or the next. Tea was brought in at four-thirty and for half an hour I paced the little drawing room, praying for strength and help. At five he was announced. We both stopped where we stood. The manservant had been gone for several moments, yet we stood and looked at one another. Then he lunged toward me and, with his head on my shoulder, wept like a child.

"Ma Biche! Ma Biche! I cannot, I cannot, I cannot any longer. Come away with me."

Never was a greater temptation. I could only try to soothe him and after the first intoxication was over and I had freed myself from his arms, I murmured: "Plus tard, plus tard, pas encore."

He went on to tell me all that had happened and how the truth had finally come out. His wife, discovering his coldness soon, taunted him with his devotion to me and sneered at the stories that had been circulated about us. Enraged, he flung at her the brutal truth: that I had arranged the marriage—which she knew—and that he had consented to it only to satisfy me; that not only had he never loved her but that she was actually distasteful to him. Poor Vivien! But I could see that for him as for me the legitimate home ties were broken.

I did not tell him how desperately unhappy I was and I would not promise to go away with him. He called me heartless, frozen, vowed that I did not love him, that I cared only for the world's sanction. God knows how little I did care! But as surely as I felt that we were bound to one another by ties stronger than man can forge, so surely did I recognise that my marriage had entangled me in obligations which I could not tranquilly disregard. There was a ball the next night at the Duchess de Doudeauville's and I told him I would give him my answer then.

Visitors were announced and after a few minutes' general talk he left. The rest of the afternoon was an ordeal. My cousin Georgina, between whom and me no love had ever been lost, was among my callers. She had a keen wit, a malicious tongue and used them

cleverly for the discomfort of her acquaintance. I can see her with her head drooping a little at the end of her weak spine, looking up at me through her slight squint and drawling: "Oh, yes—you're very pretty—it's true. You're the pretty one but I am the rich one. We will see who wins out in the end."

On this particular afternoon she was in excellent form. She gazed after Fitz James's departing figure and turned to me with a wicked smile: "Strange! One sees him nowhere—this *beau taciturne*. But here—of course—here one always finds him. What could be more natural? It is difficult to keep apart what cannot be separated," and so on.

I controlled myself and fenced as skilfully as I could, parrying her thrusts with an armour of impervious good humour. But it was a relief when they left at seven, even though I had nothing to look forward to but a tête-à-tête dinner with my mother-in-law.

I was of course quite as well aware as my friends and my own knowledge of the world could make me that Fitz James had had his share of *amours*—even perhaps more than his share, since he was unusually handsome and attractive to women. But I was confident that his love was mine now and only mine. And I had never made it a practice to encourage tattle. I formed my own judgments and abided by them unless I was forced by unmistakable evidence to discard them. I had been given plenty of opportunity to estimate the value of gossip, and I knew that malice and innuendo were an element of the very air I breathed.

In connection with which there comes to my mind a strange experience whose dénouement was not reached until some time after the period of which I write. I

was then on terms of the closest intimacy with the Duchess G., a witty, well-read woman whose society and circle of friends I found extremely exhilarating, particularly when contrasted with the musty, conservative atmosphere of my mother-in-law's home.

Marie's house was a comfortable place in which I had my own den and where I could be another self, a self out of harness, so to speak. It was always with a sense of relief and contentment that I entered that abode. She was herself an artist and congregated about her a group of artists, actors, *gens de lettres*—whom I should never have been able to invite to my own *salons*, bound as I was by my obligations as the daughter-in-law of an ancient Royalist house. It was a gay, Bohemian crowd, carefree and entertaining, interesting often and always ready to laugh, that I met at her delicious little dinners and suppers, and I enjoyed it all whole-heartedly.

She was not received in my own circle. I had secured one or two invitations for her but she felt herself *de trop* and soon dropped out of her own accord. Several of my friends had warned me against her—hinting at mysterious transactions with which she was said to be connected and at certain sinister characters who had been seen in her company. I liked and trusted her as one should the chosen companion of one's whims and pooh-poohed these suggestions.

"If there were any such thing, I could hardly help knowing it," I said impatiently. "In all this time I have never heard one questionable word."

"Very well. You will know some day perhaps when it is too late." And there the matter ended and my in-

timacy with the Duchess continued unabated to our mutual satisfaction.

Some time later I was asked to negotiate a business deal between the Turkish government and a Parisian food supply house, eager to secure contracts for the provisioning of the Turkish army. Munir Pasha whom I had known well as a member of my parents' coterie had considerable influence in the assignment of these contracts, and I agreed to go to Constantinople and do what I could to engineer the affair.

The night before I left I attended a première at the opera, wearing a dazzling array of diamonds; the earrings that had been my wedding gift from the king of Belgium and a necklace of nineteen large solitaires, an heirloom in my husband's family. An amusing incident at the opera-house makes the evening especially distinct in my memory.

The second act had just begun, yet some of our visitors of the entr-acte lingered. I was engaged in a lively tête-à-tête with one of them and sat twisted about in my chair so as to face him, using my huge fan to screen us from the other occupants of the box. Slowly I became aware of a vague stir and suppressed titters and returning to a normal position in my seat I found that in the course of my absorbing conversation my left hand had dropped over the velvet baluster of the loge and had been playing caressingly with some object that it encountered. As I withdrew the hand a ruffled head of hair followed it into my vision and then its owner's laughing face, upturned to me. Horrors! There I had been all that time twisting and pulling and *combing* with my gloved hand this total stranger's mass of hair.

It was too ridiculous and I should have been overcome with confusion had he not so charmingly saved the situation.

"It has been an exquisite sensation," he assured me with a delightful smile. "Would it not be possible for you to continue?"

The next day was very busy and Marie was helping me with my last-minute preparations. My maid appeared at the door of the dressing-room. "The diamond necklace has not gone back to the bank," she announced.

"Bother!" I cried. "What am I going to do with it at this hour? I can take the earrings with me but certainly not that *collier*."

"I will take it to the bank for you the first thing in the morning, if you like," offered Marie.

Saved again! Off I went, caught my train and in due time landed in Constantinople. No sooner had I embarked upon my interview than I discovered the absence of one very important paper, without which I could proceed no further. I left for Paris the same evening.

In the dining-car just before reaching Vienna a pretty, painted face with green eyes and flaxen hair smiled across the aisle at me.

"Don't you remember poor little me?" she asked. I looked blank and she arose from her seat to join me.

"I am the daughter of Clothilde—the daughter who ran away from school to become an actress. I am the star of *Orphée aux Enfers* and make my début in Vienna next week."

I recalled the story very well. She was the daughter of my mother's one-time maid—she whom I had bribed with prayer-beads that I might play circus. Bidding her sit down beside me, I listened to the interesting and

THE AUTHOR AND HER HUSBAND, WITH HER UNCLE, PRINCE DE CHIMAY ON HER RIGHT.

AT BEAUCHAMP, THE COUNTRY SEAT OF THE PRINCE DE CHIMAY, BABY ANTOINE SEES HIS MOTHER OFF FOR A DRIVE WITH HIS FATHER, UNCLE AND COUSIN.

CHATEAU D'AVARAY.

pathetic tale of her flight, her struggles—and now her triumph to be crowned by next week's début.

When she had finished I said: "I should like very much to share your good fortune. Isn't there something you would like to have—some little souvenir of our meeting that I may give you?"

She hesitated a moment and then, beaming, exclaimed: "Oh, yes, a tiara! I want a tiara!"

Good heavens! A tiara! This was more than I had bargained for.

"Yes," she went on. "In fact, I must have one for the play. Oh, only an imitation one, of course. Not *real* diamonds or rubies."

Ah, this was better. Relieved, I promised: "You shall have your tiara, with pleasure."

"And may I have it for my début next week?"

"I shall see that you have it by then."

She had just time to give me directions for sending it before the train pulled into Vienna.

Reaching the city early in the morning, I looked up in an *annuaire* of Paris the names and addresses of dealers and *fabricants de pierres*. I went immediately to one of them but found only a clerk in attendance. I decided to wait and drifted idly through the rooms. As I turned over a pile of clasps and mountings that lay on one of the tables, my eye was caught by three links, void of stones, that showed from beneath the heap and looked somehow familiar. I saw that they were part of a longer chain and when I had disentangled it from the rest, I counted the toothless holes that seemed to be grinning up at me. There were nineteen! This was the setting of the necklace—I had no doubt of it—that Marie had offered to deposit safely in the bank for me.

By the time M. Fels arrived I had recovered some degree of composure. I arranged with him for the model and stones to be used in the tiara I wanted and then asked him to show me some specimens of his workmanship. He immediately spoke of a magnificent necklace that had been left with him—an old family heirloom—consisting of nineteen large diamonds. Its owner had had gambling losses and was compelled to sell some of the stones and he had been commissioned to replace them with paste jewels, blending the true and the false so that no detection would be possible.

I was boiling with rage but I think M. Fels surmised only deep interest, for he offered to show me the stones if I cared to see them. He brought them in and laid them on the table before me. I saw that their number was complete and, placing my hand on the little mound they made, I said quietly:

"M. Fels, these stones are mine!"

He took a step toward me.

"If you make any trouble about my taking them," I went on, "I shall have you as well as the person who brought them to you arrested."

I gave him all the details he needed to convince him that I was speaking the truth and, leaving a written receipt in his hands, I took the treasures home.

I planned to return to Constantinople that night and had only the day in which to get the document I required, so that every moment was full. Just as I was preparing to leave the house, there was a knock at the door of my dressing-room and Marie stood before me. She had her own key and Clothilde had telephoned her of my return.

"Chérie!" she cried. "How is it possible? Back already?"

"No, *not* back," I answered. "But please give your key of here to Clothilde."

Bewildered, she did so.

"And now," I said coldly, "go out of here as quickly as you can. I loathe snakes, venomous or not, and I forbid you ever to see me again."

She ran toward me: "Chérie, ma chérie—what have they been telling you about me again?"

"Nothing—not a word. But these"—and I showed her the empty collar, "have told me all I need or want to know. You are to me as though you had never existed."

She stared for a moment; then, sobbing, left the room.

CHAPTER IX

Pilgrimage

ON the evening of Georgina's visit as I was going up to my apartments I was joined by my husband on the stairway. He was pale as death and faltered: "Il faut que je vous parle." On the landing he continued: "I beg you to save me! I have a debt of honour I cannot pay! I entreat you to help me!"

"Ask your mother," was my answer.

"No," he whined, "I can't. She will do nothing."

I knew this to be true. But as I was about to turn from him with an emphatic negative, it suddenly occured to me that here might be a way to bring my problem nearer solution.

"I will see what can be done by to-morrow," I said slowly. "How much is it you owe?"

Sheepishly he answered: "Twenty thousand francs, but they must be paid before midnight to-morrow."

"I will see you in the baby's room in the morning at eight o'clock," I said, and left him.

I went to my son's bedside and, kneeling down, prayed for strength to be resolute, not to run away to freedom and happiness, leaving all these open wounds to cure or envenom themselves. And I believed it was from God that the peace came which flooded my soul as I knelt there, and on which I rested as a tired swimmer who has reached firm land. I was seized with a great longing to find again the God of my childhood—

to remain secure in that haven in which I had found quiet for a few brief moments. For I knew that it would not last, that I should be torn again this way and that by my temptations and my will.

I remained long in thought and when I finally went to bed it was four o'clock.

At eight I was in my son's room, holding him in my lap. After all, he was the only thing we had in common that was precious to us both, and I thought to impress upon my husband the finality of what I had to say by giving the interview the touch of sacredness that the baby's presence brought. When Herbert appeared I tried to make clear to him something of what I had been going through; that I had found the atmosphere of his home from the beginning depressing and gloomy —a jail with so many jailers; that, however feeble had been my own efforts to make possible our life together, they had met with nothing but the blankest indifference from him; that of his own volition and with no apparent regret he had closed the door of our intimate life between us; that I had no feeling for him and never could have; that, so far as he was concerned, I should leave him gladly and freely, debts and all, but that in order to save the boy's name from being smirched, I would find a way to pay this debt.

He was dissolved in gratitude.

"But there are two conditions that I exact from you this time."

"Anything you like I will do, ma chère amie. Only save me."

"In order to get this money it will be necessary for me to sell the house in the Rue de l'Elysée. You will have to sign a power of attorney."

"But of course."

"Furthermore," I added, watching him intently, "I want a separation from you for six months—to be able to travel and breathe. I want, finally, to go to the Holy Land and seek there an answer to my problem."

"But certainly. Anything you like. So long as this debt is paid."

I had gained my point but, knowing my husband, I insisted upon a written agreement. It must be understood that the separation for which I had asked was not a mere living apart for six months but a legal agreement that would give me complete financial freedom and the right to come and go at will.

He thanked and thanked me. I said: "Thank the little fellow. It is he who has saved you."

We went together to a strange notary as our family lawyer would probably have been unwilling to act. My husband gave me a full power of attorney to transact the sale of the house my parents had given me, and an agreement that for six months we were to be separated, during which time I was to be my own free agent. On my return from my travels I should decide on the future.

I left him and went to Our Lady of Victories and thence to the office of the Baron de Hirsch, whose own house was in the Rue de l'Elysée. I had heard it said that he wished to buy one close by for his recently married son. I offered him mine and the whole transaction was concluded, at the figure my parents had named, by lunch time. I did not want to go home then or to see any one. I cashed twenty thousand francs in bills and took a long drive after telephoning to the Jockey Club

to tell my husband that I expected to see him at seven o'clock at the house.

When I reached home I found him frantic with anxiety.

"Alors, chère amie, have you obtained a result? Have you sold the Hôtel?"

I gave him the twenty thousand francs, saying: "These are the last, the last in the world you will ever receive from me; whatever happens, the last."

He could not contain his delight, his gratitude. He overwhelmed me with appreciation.

"Now," I said, "that is your share in the bargain. Concerning mine: I am going away, probably to-morrow."

His face lengthened and paled. I foolishly misread his emotions. So our parting did affect him a little after all! My heart softened, but I was soon enlightened.

"Do you not think, dear friend, that your going will make a very bad impression on the public?"

I smiled a little at my own sentimental interpretation of his distress, but answered quietly: "We will talk all this over after dinner to-night. We must dress now or we shall be late, and your mother will not like that."

"Oh," he said agitatedly, "but I cannot dine here. I must dine at the Jockey Club. Besides, there is an interesting party of poker to be—"

He never finished. I pushed him off.

"Go! Go! You—oh, you are hopeless. You take money from me to pay what you assure me is your last gambling debt, and before that money has even paid

your debt you cannot have dinner with me this last evening because another gambling match is at hand."

I never knew how he left but somehow he was gone, and I wondered then and have wondered ever since whether that money went to pay or to play.

A little later I had my dinner with the Duchess, after which I told her what I planned to do, though not all the ugly steps leading to my decision. Just enough to make clear that I was in earnest and that if she wanted any additional information she was welcome to ask her son for it. The essential facts she grasped at last: that we were separated, that I was going away the next day with the Holy Land as the goal of my journey and that what was to come after would be decided only upon my return. My son would remain with his nurse, the trustworthy Emilie, and in not more than six months, perhaps sooner, I should return.

Blinking her eyes, she exclaimed: "C'est du roman, c'est fou; que pensera le monde, le qu'en dira-t-on?"

"My dear mother, what the world will say has nothing to do with me; if people want to speculate and gossip they can always find the opportunity; my going or staying will make little difference."

I kissed her pretty plump hand and went slowly upstairs. I had promised Fitz James my answer at the Duchess de Doudeauville's ball. A black velvet dress, a diamond star blazing in my hair, my diamond earrings, made me look as I felt, a frozen iceberg with the weight of a hundred years on my shoulders. He came to me in the ballroom and we went into the Duchess's little *capitonné* boudoir.

I told him that I had decided to go away for six months but added hastily as his face brightened and he

leaned toward me: "I am going alone, to seek the truth in the Holy Land."

He smiled but when I continued unresponsive and he saw I was in earnest he grew cajoling.

"Well, then, at least be fair to yourself and to me and know the truth you are seeking. Perhaps I am part of it. Why not let me join you or go part of the way with you before you start for Jerusalem?"

I could not suppress a smile. He was delightful, but I answered with some solemnity: "I absolutely refuse to say when, where and how I am going. If you happen to be where I am before that time I will not avoid you. But Fate must see to our meeting if we are to meet. This is in good faith, my friend."

As he held my hand in parting and whispered: "Toujours," the word found a mute echo in my heart. But I only replied: "Qui sait? Peut-être jamais."

I gave Clothilde instructions to pack and was up with her all night. The last day I spent entirely with my little son. I took him to St. Cloud and later to Vincennes, avoiding the Bois de Boulogne and all my familiar haunts. We rambled along the bank of the Seine and lunched at a little cabaret as deserted on weekdays as it was crowded on Sundays. We ate *goûter au Pré Catelan*, fresh milk and black bread and butter and the little fellow crowed and shouted with delight. It had been our first real day together and so altogether enchanting did I find it that the thought of leaving him wrenched at my heart. Again I sought wildly for another way of escape and again I thought of Argenteau. It would be sweet to have long days like this one with my son at Argenteau. Without giving myself time to think I sent an urgent wire to my father.

Then we drove to Nôtre Dame des Victoires, where I prayed to Our Lady that she might keep the boy and me together. As I knelt there I felt Antoine's little arms creeping about my neck and his moist kisses on my face, as he called me sweet names. Ah, it was good! If I had been taught or had had the wisdom to teach myself a way of life different from the frothy emptiness to which I had been reared, we might both have been happier.

At six o'clock came the answer from my father: "No, impossible. Do not come if Herbert does not come also. Absolutely refuse to receive you without him." It was my mother's verdict, I was sure. He must have got in touch with her and transferred from her lips that plural *Refusons*. Left to himself, my father would never have said: "I refuse." However, there it was and there was no appeal.

I left without seeing any one in a *coupé de l'Urbaine* and said, so that all could hear who might care to listen, "Gare du Nord."

Clothilde had left long before with the same orders but, once at the Gare du Nord, had had the luggage transferred to another omnibus and joined me at the Gare du Midi. By nine-thirty the train had left, en route for Marseilles. The journey had begun and that was as far as my plans were laid. On arriving at Marseilles, I asked: "When is the next boat leaving and where is it going?"

I was informed that a French boat was leaving for Tunis the next morning and that I might go aboard at once. Aboard I went as Madame de Limbourg (one of the family names). The first step had been taken.

The Cannebière looked very pretty as the ship left

port, bright, characteristic. Notre Dame de la Garde, the Madonna all sailors venerate, dominated the horizon from the top of the mountain on which the church is built. As she grew smaller and smaller in the distance my heart went out to her in humble prayer that she might set my straying feet on the path marked out for them.

It is perhaps difficult for any but a Catholic to realise the mood in which I set about my pilgrimage. It had in it much of the mysticism and childlike trust that characterises the faith in which I had been reared. There where our Lord had suffered agonies and died for mankind, I should go to Him and ask Him to still the confusion in my soul and give me strength to endure the burden of life. To me, a believing Catholic, this was a natural and logical step. I would go to my Father in penitence and receive absolution and all my miseries would be as though they had never been. I should begin again sweet and clean and fresh. Never did I doubt the issue of my quest. It was there in the distance, a dear treasure, whose thought already gave me some measure of comfort and peace.

The Mediterranean was balmy, mild as a pond. It was a restful, lazy trip, bare of incident. Tunis was a revelation of colour and confusion, the natives' golden-brown skins contrasting with the white houses—dazzlingly, blindingly white—and the blue, blue sky. I shall always remember one tall, handsome bronzed native in a huge white burnous that fastened about his head with a round cord and fell in ample folds to his feet. He wore a flower behind his ear, so as to have the blossom and its scent at the level of his nose. The contrast between the white jasmine and the dark skin was

striking. Beside this tall straight figure sat an old man with a long white beard, clad like the other, except that his burnous was of a contrasting brown. It was a picture.

Three things I learned in Tunis: one good, scrambled eggs with tomato and cheese; one indifferent, riding a bicycle; and one altogether bad, the taste of absinthe.

From Tunis on to Malta where I unfortunately stumbled into an English acquaintance through whose report the knowledge of my presence there filtered back to France. The next night I was en route for Alexandria, via Brindisi. Brindisi! Only five short years, a century of unhappiness, since I had been there, a newly wedded bride, full of wonder at what life held in store for me. My thoughts were too painful for me to want even to set foot on its soil. I sailed for Egypt without landing.

It was good to reach the comfort of the Shepherd Hotel at Cairo, to which we drove in a native carriage with the swiftest of horses, sheik runners in their gold embroidered brightly coloured vests racing ahead to clear the way.

The following day was quiet, after I had interviewed a dragoman to discover what was to be seen and done. He mapped out a dahabeeyah trip on the Nile, another along the Isthmus of Suez, a visit to the Pyramids, a trip into the desert—all this to take about three months of my time. I inquired at Cook's about my Palestine trip. I wanted to do it in twelve or thirteen weeks, as a pilgrimage, not as a leisured, easy journey. Having made the necessary arrangements that included an itinerary of all the holy places from the Nativity to Calvary and thus satisfied myself that the Omega of my

trip was a certainty, I turned my mind to the delights of Cairo and its surroundings.

The next day I spent on my balcony, straightening out papers and taking stock of myself. I was here. I had broken with my jail and jailers, I had not succumbed to the nearly overpowering temptation to go with Fitz James; the pilgrimage to the Holy Land was settled; from there I should go back with a resolution, a purpose, a decision that nothing could shake. But now I was here in Cairo, free, eager—the lid off the bubbling kettle—and, like the Arab steed, sniffing at the desert, the sea, the world! I had ten or twelve weeks in which to slake my thirst for the new and the strange before my pilgrimage began.

I had no news from anywhere. As Madame de Limbourg I was enjoying a thoroughly satisfactory incognito.

A trip to the Pyramids of Ghizeh and the Sphinx had been arranged for the next day. We started on horseback before dawn, along that magnificent Palm Avenue that leads from Cairo to the outskirts of the town. The desert loomed larger and larger till we came to its very border. Climbing the rugged side of the Ghizeh Pyramid was a tedious and difficult enterprise but, between the Arabs who pulled and the Arabs who pushed, never mind how hard or unceremoniously, we landed as high as could be. From this height, turning one's back on Cairo and the Nile, the desert unrolled itself before our eyes, boundless and awe-inspiring.

Because it happened that a string of camels with their noble, slow, ugly gait appeared on the far horizon and captured my imagination, I decided to stay longer. I sent my dragoman back to Cairo to fetch Clothilde with

some clothes for the evening to the little hotel on the desert border, and on I stayed. Dusk found me still high on the Pyramids and the camel caravan apparently not much nearer. But I did not leave until they had camped for the night. Oh, those little yellow lights moving about the fires in the fading dusk! It was weird and wonderful.

I jumped and crawled down the side of the Pyramid. The descent was even worse than the climb. I could not stay in my room at the hotel that night but spent it on the balcony, watching the lights of the caravan's camp go out one by one. The big red moon rose, like a midnight sun. The glory of that desert night! Its memory has never left me.

The next day I went with a small party of scientists to visit the Pyramids and the Sphinx. The magnitude of the grim stone figure, its silent lesson, impressed me deeply—but not so deeply as my private expedition of the day before.

I was more than ever eager to organise a caravan and make my own explorations into desert life, and on our way back to the hotel I instructed the dragoman to arrange the details.

CHAPTER X

The Desert

AFTER dinner that evening I watched the dancing from my balcony. Mechanically I looked at the clock. Midnight. I decided to retire and let the dreamy waltz music lull me to sleep. I bathed and prepared for bed but—why I cannot tell—instead of getting into it I walked over to the wardrobe in which my dresses were kept and took out a strange gold-and-white embroidered garment, like a peplum, put it on, rolled up the massive copper coils of my hair in Greek style and, with sandals completing the Directoire effect, went downstairs.

Like an apparition, entering at exactly the same moment by the opposite door, was Fitz James accompanied by Prince Henri d'Orleans.

They greeted me and explained that they had arrived in Cairo together that very day. Through that chance meeting in Malta, my cousin (as well as many others) had learned that I was going to Egypt. His friend, Prince Henri, was in Alexandria and he had an excellent pretext for joining him there and accompanying him to Cairo.

We two evidently betrayed some embarrassment which Prince Henri covered charmingly by proposing to introduce us to each other and proceeding to do so. We passed through the dining room into the cool, screened, sweetly scented garden, where the music was

just audible enough to add its charm to the romance of the place. I spoke of the trip I was planning into the desert next day. The Prince immediately proposed that I join his caravan, to start the next night and to be composed of himself and Fitz James and the Marquis and Marchioness de Moreles. These last two had not quite decided whether they would go or not, but my consent would carry theirs with it.

I told him that he must not press me and that I would give him my decision the next day. But in my heart I knew that I had already decided.

I went to my balcony, there to examine my situation in all its aspects. Here was the very danger from which I had fled and in more virulent form. I was proposing to accompany it and to live with it for days and days under the escort of two desert caravans. And apart from the danger to my own integrity, there was the risk of what might happen if the story of this escapade should become public property, as there was an excellent chance it might.

My sterner self said: "Don't go." But why not? argued sophistry. I had intended making a desert trip, anyway, before I knew of his arrival. Why not now? And how foolish to go alone when I might add to my pleasure by being with my friends. Was I afraid? Yes, that was it. I was afraid. But it is stupid to admit fear. So to prove to myself that there was nothing to fear I found a hundred good reasons for taking advantage of the circumstances in which I found myself. It had seemed perfectly natural to the others that I should go. Why should I raise ridiculous obstacles, creating a delicacy in the situation that no one else seemed to see. The cross-examination ended with "The

trip will last only three or four weeks, we will all five be together, besides the two caravan guides, and the Prince's companion, Professor Doissy. As soon as I return I will go straight to make my pilgrimage to Jerusalem."

Having soothed my conscience, I put all disturbing questions finally out of my mind and yielded myself to the joy of anticipation.

That day was devoted to shopping and packing and to the commission of two pieces of folly. The Moreles were registered in their own names, I as Madame de Limbourg, the Prince was called the Count de Blois and Fitz James, the Marquis of Yarmouth. That was all right, and nobody need have been the wiser, had not some evil spirit directed us to go in force that night to the première of Thais where the incognitos were naturally seen through. Again: after returning to the hotel for supper and changing our opera clothes for riding habits, we found that we had an hour to spare before we were due at the caravan's meeting place and visited an Arab gambling den for a sight of Cairo's night life. There too we were recognised by reporters who had seen us two hours before at the opera house and saw us now again in the unmistakable attire of an expedition.

A third foolish thing for which I alone was responsible was that I sent home my incomparable maid, Clothilde. But what use should I have for her in the desert or on my Jerusalem pilgrimage? It was much more sensible to send her back to Paris.

But it was not until later that the seed of our folly bore fruit. That night we were very gay and high-spirited until finally at two o'clock we joined our caravan at the gate nearest the Pyramids, just on the outskirts of Cairo.

A last survey, the slow rising of the loaded camels, and "En route la caravane!"

Our caravan was composed of forty Arabs, twenty-seven camels and a donkey. We saluted the Pyramids of Ghizeh as we passed them, and pushed on to make our first stop in the desert itself. The heat was great and the rest welcome. Two tents were pitched and after a meal and a cool drink from the whole skin pouches, we slept for three or four hours and then pushed on.

We travelled late into the night and had our supper by firelight. Then on again till we reached the Libyan desert. We had plenty of water for washing but I was introduced to the sand-wash. I can't say I liked it, though it was quick and cleansing.

Presently we passed a small oasis, as green and sweet-looking as the miles of golden sand had been arid and menacing. The tribe whose territory we were nearing had been informed of the approach of a "royal party," headed by Prince Henri, and had prepared for us an entertainment of wild native dances to the accompaniment of what was to them evidently music, to us a succession of noisy and meaningless sounds. We were delighted with our welcome until a handsome Arab gravely handed us each a curiously fashioned container from which rose a sickeningly sweet smell. Professor Doissy recognised it and said rapidly: "Sickening but not dangerous." Realising that a refusal to drink would offend them to anger and result in Heaven knows what unpleasantness we attempted the beverage. Ye gods! Why not die after the first taste of the stuff so as not to have to go on with another!

We stayed there for a couple of hours, then resumed our march. We decided to abandon the route that had

been planned for us and go a long way about so as to see more of the desert and eventually to reach Medinet el Fayoum where there was good game and fishing. The Prince was now more or less guiding the caravan and it was not long before we began to hear murmurs of dissatisfaction from the men at the unexpected prolongation of the trip. But it was not until we had left the little oasis far behind that any serious disturbance arose. One of the men approached the Prince and told him respectfully but firmly that his comrades insisted upon taking the shortest route to the nearest village. A consultation was called and we decided that we would not give up our exploration of the desert unless we were forced to. The day passed in uncertainty, with a storm brooding. Late in the afternoon, ready to continue our march after a short halt, we watched the greater number of our men and camels turn silently in the opposite direction to go by the shortest route to the oasis we had left three days before. This was serious. We had no choice but to abandon our leisurely progress. We still had enough men, camels and provisions to reach our destination but we could no longer afford to linger. The Prince took definite charge and on we went.

That night we travelled and stopped at dawn, intending to push on as late in the day as the scorching heat would permit. It was Sunday and we seemed but a few miles on a bird line from El Fayoum. We rested from eleven till three and, on awaking, found that the remainder of the caravan had gone, leaving only our own and two pack camels, and the little donkey that carried the daily water provision. Investigating our resources, we found that we had two pouches of water and a roast turkey. There was plenty of feed for the donkey but little for us. We real-

ised that we were in acute danger and that it would take both coolness and courage to see us through. The Prince was an experienced traveller, and, after having surveyed the horizon from a height of sand with the aid of a powerful magnifying glass, he assured us that by taking a practically straight route we should reach El Fayoum the next morning. We were much encouraged and pushed on with energy and good cheer.

For the first time since leaving Cairo Fitz James and I found ourselves alone. The Prince, burdened a little by his responsibility, rode well in advance and Moreles and his wife who were worried kept close beside him. Professor Doissy, guarding the donkey and his provisions, brought up the rear.

A curious hesitation and avoidance of one another had kept us apart up to now. I was satisfied to know him there, within reach. It was as though I were afraid that any move on the part of either of us would disturb the surface placidity with which for the moment I was quite content. I think he was happy too, but we were both silent, biding our time and feasting on the delight of every hour together in this barren, gold desert, so cruelly beautiful.

Now, as he rode by my side, "Ma Piche" were the first words that thrilled me to a recognition that I was facing another and more delicious danger than that which the desert threatened. Far along into that wonderful moonlight night we talked. With my plan to visit Jerusalem, and its object, he was completely out of sympathy. To him it was humbug, superstition. But realising its preciousness to me, he was wise enough to waste little effort in trying to bring me to his way of thinking. He argued along other lines.

With a cool clear logic that was devoid of any trace of sentimentality he drew for me an unrelenting picture of my life as he saw it; the warped childhood, the cheated love, the meaningless marriage, the futility and the pain. What was the use of going on along the same path? Had I not had enough?

"Have your Jerusalem if you must," he agreed reasonably, "but enjoy this too. Be true to your pilgrimage vow since you have made it but need that prevent you from being fair to our love as well? Whatever the other may turn out to be, you *know* that this is the truth."

"How do I know?" I smiled. "Perhaps it is a mirage like El Fayoum." But my smile betrayed me and, quivering and intense, I told him straight that much as I loved him and revelled in these sweet hours together, I should remain true to my pledge. Our future would be decided by the stronger influence. Ourselves or Jerusalem? One of the two it had to be. If, as I prayed, the pilgrimage had its hoped-for effect, I should cast away all this, my love, my dreams, my longings, for the plain course of duty and should find pleasure in its accomplishment. If not— With this he had to be content.

We had travelled several more hours toward the horizon. The Prince, having ridden far ahead and realised that we could not reach El Fayoum on this stretch, came back to call a halt till daybreak. We made a serious dent in the turkey and used a large part of one of the water pouches for ourselves and the donkey.

The three men left us to scan the horizon. Yes, El Fayoum *was* in sight. Eight hours would land us there. So on we went, riding till two in the afternoon. We could all see the oasis. "Of course. It is quite close,"

we said encouragingly to one another. Only the Prince looked perplexed.

On we rode till nightfall. The elusive oasis was no nearer than at noon. We had our supper; not much left after that of the succulent turkey. Opening the second and last pouch of water we found to our amazement and horror that it had leaked and was nearly empty!

We looked at one another but spoke no word. What was there to say?

"Now for Medinet el Fayoum," cried the Prince, looking steadfastly in the other direction, "with all possible speed."

The next morning, Tuesday, there was no change. The oasis was always there, apparently within a few hours' ride, but we never seemed to get any nearer. At noon it was the same. All day Wednesday and Thursday we moved on mechanically, hardly caring whether we lived or died but making some show of good cheer for each other's sake. The pangs of hunger soon disappeared but our parched throats were an unending torture. The poor little donkey was pitiful. The Prince rode ahead, hoping against hope to bring back good tidings but we had ceased to believe in good tidings.

It seemed improbable that we should reach El Fayoum at all. Thursday night was dark, the moon rose very late, yet we thought we had better go on travelling and die, if die we must, going onward. The dawn of a new day found us too exhausted even to look for the oasis. What was the good of seeing it if we could never reach it?

Sunrise Friday morning told us a story we could not believe. There was the oasis right ahead of us, this time within a few camel-strides. In a moment we were kneel-

ing by pools of slimy, greenish swamp water on the outskirts of the village and frantically drinking. What hideous residue it was I do not want to know but it was wet and something to be grateful for. As a matter of fact I believe that our swollen throats prevented us from swallowing the stuff but we imagined we did. We lay in the shade of the first big date tree we had seen since the early days of our trip and waited there for Doissy and the donkey. Poor little donkey, how he drank! But Doissy abstained, which made us wonder whether the leak in that water pouch had been a blow dealt by Fate or by Doissy.

It was a sorry caravan of six camels, their riders and a donkey that entered the green and cool oasis of Medinet el Fayoum. Nevertheless it was greeted by the natives as a "mighty one." The English representative met us with his staff, freshly garbed in white, pleasant as possible. Introductions were made and we entered the Residence palace.

It was deliciously cool, white inside and out, with magnificent Persian rugs and tall Egyptian copper incense holders.

Our clothes had come by messenger up the Nile and to bathe and get into a teagown had never been such bliss. And, oh, the delight of that first drink of Scotch and ice-water!

We had a late breakfast and disgraced ourselves. Not only did we seem to be making up for our three days of famine but to be storing up enough for three more.

The rooms were all windows, long and screened by dull green curtains. Everywhere were couches and divans loaded with cushions, but no actual beds. I was introduced to one of these lounges and for sleep I prepared.

The fans overhead, moved by some invisible agency, blew cool air through the room. It was exquisite and I slept soundly and dreamlessly.

The next morning Prince Henri, Fitz James, and four or five officers with an escort left very early for some fishing and hunting. The Marquise and I stayed at the Residency for two days, lounging about to our hearts' content. Then we took to our riding habits again and, with a wealth of provisions, joined the hunters. I have never liked fishing but I did enjoy the funny little boats shooting at a rapid pace along the glittering water and the natives singing as they rowed. I had a big white heron to my credit, my first and only shot. The Marquise was an excellent huntress, shooting everything in sight and never missing. She stayed with the hunters when I returned to the Residency.

The mail from Cairo had arrived. My share of it was good; my son was in perfect health. But when the hunters returned the next day and we had given them their mail, the budget was more disturbing. Moreles found that he had to return to Italy as quickly as possible, as one of his sons was very ill; Prince Henri must meet his father at the second cataract of the Nile; and Fitz James showed me two stormy letters from his wife and sister concerning a clipping from the *Figaro* which described in full the opening of the Cairo Opera House with the names of some prominent occupants of the *avant scène* and sundry dark innuendos that revealed us in a very desperate light.

Fitz James was jubilant. This was exactly what he wanted—a divorce was in sight. But it was far from being what I wanted.

It was an ugly situation that required tact and skill

COUNT FITZ JAMES DURING HIS MILITARY SERVICE IN AFRICA, 1876. SON OF ARABELLA CHURCHILL, SISTER OF THE FUTURE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH AND OF THE DUKE OF FITZ JAMES, DESCENDANT OF JAMES I OF ENGLAND.

THE AUTHOR POSED IN CLASSICAL GARB, IN CONFORMANCE WITH THE SOCIAL FAD OF THE MOMENT.

in the handling and, as always, the necessity for action found me on my mettle.

We all left the Residency early the next day. The Moreles went toward Cairo; the Prince and the lamentable Doissy took the southbound train.

I should like to pay homage here to that tall, blue-eyed, ill-fated prince of the blood royal of France. First cousin to the Duc d'Orléans who was pretender to the throne and called by his partisans "le roi Philippe V," Henri's charm and gallantry had made him so popular that it was feared his cousin's chance for the throne might be endangered by it. He was therefore sent on these various exploratory expeditions and though his was a brave and adventurous spirit the enforced exile from his country embittered his life.

After his trip to Egypt he went to Calcutta with the Duc d'Orléans where the Viceroy and Marchioness of Dufferin treated them right royally to the memorable tiger hunt in Nepaul, when a tigress leaped on the Prince's elephant and was shot by him in the nick of time, a skilful and daring feat.

In 1897 while Prince Henri was revisiting Abyssinia occurred his duel with the Duc de Turin in which both were wounded. On account of his discovery in Assam of the sources of the Irrawaddy River and his book, *De Paris au Tonkin à travers le Thibet Inconnu*, he was presented by the British Royal Geographical Society with a gold medal. Strange to say, in spite of all the good friendship shown him by the English royal family and his cordial treatment by Great Britain, he was a violent Anglophobe. Of his tragic death I shall have more to tell later.

Fitz James and I took a *dahabeeyah* to make the most

of our last hours together. He was intent on divorce. I realised that he would be doubly impatient now with what seemed to him the perverse whim of my Jerusalem trip and that I should accomplish nothing by using it as an argument. I therefore pointed out to him that I had no divorce, but only a separation and that his freedom would leave me still bound; that our position, thanks to my recklessness, was at best dubious and that I had no overwhelming desire to be named in his wife's divorce suit. He assured me that this would not be the case, that I was to leave all that to him, but if the truth were known he was no more anxious than I to jeopardise the future. After hours of struggle I gained my point. He consented to return to Paris and give the lie—for it was a lie—to the rumours stirred up by our Egyptian adventure.

That same morning we left the Nile, he to take the outgoing steamer to Brindisi and I to set my face toward Palestine.

CHAPTER XI

The Holy Land

AT Jaffa I found a letter from my husband repeating the stories that I had had from Fitz James.

"Your pilgrimage," he wrote, "is a strange one. It is said that Fitz James has joined you in Cairo and that you are going with him into the desert. Vivien swears that all was prearranged and that she will divorce him. You had better come back at once."

That letter, firm and direct, did not sound like Herbert. I could see his mother's fine hand in this. Perhaps it *would* be wise to go back. For a moment I wavered. But Jerusalem tugged at me too powerfully to be resisted.

I wired my husband that I should return in four weeks and advised him to laugh as I did at the fabrications of reporters. Then I dismissed from my mind every thought that was not connected with my pilgrimage.

That night I registered at the English hotel as Mrs. Hopkins, of all the names that were ever invented! At dawn I took once more to the riding habit that I was to wear for the next three weeks. The trip was tedious, tiring, monotonous in the extreme. The mountains that we had to ascend and descend before we reached the walls of the Holy City seemed to me endless, though I infinitely prefer them to the abominable rail route that has since been built between Jaffa and Jerusalem. The only compensation was the view which at each summit was more completely revealed until the last hill was

reached and the city lay before us in all its beauty. My heart swelled as I gazed at those low-lying domes and mosques and minarets. What did this place, on which I had built so much, hold for me?

I had only a rapid glimpse of the holy places as we passed along. I listened to the names carelessly chanted by the guide: The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Via Dolorosa, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Church of the Ascension, the Tomb of the Virgin. I repeated them softly to myself and each one seemed to me a miracle. My soul was fired with a very passion of ardour for righteousness. No effort was too great, no sacrifice too impossible to make myself worthy of entering, a humble penitent, into the presence of Our Lord. I *would* be different, I would be strong and good. Temptation! I snapped my fingers at it. What was temptation in a mood like mine! A rag to be kicked into a corner, a hurdle that my triumphant spirit would leap splendidly and without a tremor. A monastery was the only fit place to live in and sing the greatness of the Great!

Then why did I hesitate? Was it a premonition? I do not think so. How, when the mere sound of those sacred names could so thrill and move me, should I doubt that my penetration of the Holy of Holies would crystallise that mood of spiritual exaltation and make it permanent?

I do not know. I know only that the next day, when we had driven to the Golden Gate and by the Via Dolorosa from the great judgment hall to Calvary, and stood at last within the splendour of the Temple, I wanted to go no further. Nothing stood between me and the Holy Sepulchre, the goal of my search, but to take the step which separated me from it. From that step I shrank.

"To-morrow," I told myself, "not to-day," and to the guide, "I am tired. We will leave this until to-morrow."

He agreed promptly to the postponement and suggested that we take the drive that had been reserved for the following day, leaving to-morrow free for the Temple. Quite right and as it should be. And yet I regarded him curiously. How was it possible for him, walking so close by my side, to be so completely unaware of the chaos of emotion in which I was whirling! And what, I reflected further, did I know of the storms that might even then be tearing at his heart behind that impassive exterior.

I dismissed both philosophic speculation and the vague oppression that had been disturbing me and gave myself to the pleasure of the drive.

But the dawn of the next day found me ready. Gone was the uneasiness of yesterday. I was impatient for my revelation. How could I have put it off, I thought scornfully, when it had been within my grasp!

At eight o'clock we were en route. The guide took me first to visit the Mosque of Omar built on the foundation of the Temple of Solomon. Thence we walked by the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

So absorbed was I in my thoughts that his comments on the splendour of the huge dome of the church, on the strange oblong shape of the interior as we entered, on the magnificent gold and silver ornaments, came to me like far-off whispers. It was not until he pointed out the various oratories—Maronite, Syrian, Copt, Latin, Armenian, Christian—that I began to emerge from the spell that bound me.

All these creeds! Even here! Pushing, quarrelling, asserting each one his right over his neighbour. I might

have realised it all along if I had ever stopped to think about it. But I never had.

"Never mind!" I comforted myself. "The Holy Sepulchre will solve my perplexities. To understand is not necessary, only to believe."

In a moment I found myself again in the grip of that mystic emotion to which I could give no name and, scarcely aware of what I did, I stumbled down the steps to the enclosure that holds the Sepulchre and prostrated myself before it. In tears, I prayed as I had never prayed before and probably never will again. Then complete oblivion.

After a time the voice of the guide became audible. As my senses cleared I found myself surrounded by a group of chattering people, some in native robes, some in religious garb, so wild and strange-looking that, coming out of a dead faint as I had, the effect was terrifying. But the kindness of their intention was unmistakable and when they had been assured of my recovery, they left me alone in the outer gallery.

I felt dull and numb, as if recovering from the effects of a very high fall. I had been deathly ill, but I had had no revelation. Where was the soaring confidence and joy of my arrival in Jerusalem? Utterly vanished and gone. Why, why, why?

For the twentieth time my weary brain went back over the incidents of the past few weeks, retracing each step to discover if I could wherein I had failed. But I arrived nowhere. Only at the certainty that my cherished plan had ended not in peace, but in emptiness. My head whirled as it had twenty years before when Baddy, putting me to bed one night, had said:

"Mimi dear, go to sleep saying a prayer for my poor

brother who was killed in the battle of Balaklava. Pray that we meet in heaven for all eternity together."

"What is eternity, Baddy?" I asked.

"Darling, it is something you cannot quite understand. It is something that will never end."

"Not even next year?"

"No, not next year nor next nor next nor any; never, never," she replied.

My eyes widened and I breathed hard in my effort to realise the conception of endless time that I wanted to understand. Thinking to help me, Baddy pulled off a gold bracelet which she wore, and, placing it in front of me, turned her finger round and round in its endless circle. I followed with my finger, growing more and more bewildered and dazed until I was swept by so new and terrifying a sensation that I fell into a deep faint from which I was with difficulty revived. I suppose that my young mind had caught some glimmer of what eternity might mean and found it unendurable.

In the shady gallery of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre I lived through that experience again. Too tired for thought, I was hurled, shaken and terrified, into the comfortless spaces of infinity.

The guide was speaking. "If you want to see the Holy Sepulchre, we must hasten. It is near four and it will soon be closed."

Near four! And we had come in at eight!

I followed him. How different it all was from what I had expected. He explained in detail the origin and significance of the creeds and sects whose oratories surrounded the Sepulchre. On the very marble of the Holy Sepulchre itself were three altars of three differently denominated creeds. Here where I had come to seek

truth and communion direct through my creed to God, I found only confusion and the old eternal wrangle; Jews, Mohammedans, Catholics, Protestants—all in the everlasting battle for supremacy, each shouting his own claim and denying that of the others.

I could bear no more. I ran up the steps and out and on and on. The guide caught up with me. I gasped: "Hotel!" and, feeling his responsibility, I suppose, he accompanied me to the door.

Taking my vigil on the lonely balcony, I looked myself in the face. There was for me no regeneration. I was the same person I had always been, with the same desires and the same passionate will; in worse plight than before because I was now without guide or rudder; a ship, dainty and well equipped, adrift on an open sea. I knew that danger was in sight. Memories of Egypt and of El Fayoum rose to tempt me but I put them fiercely away. I was still too close to the tragedy of this miserable fiasco to find comfort in anything that the future might hold.

My contract with Cook's called for a definite programme to be followed each day and I was glad to be held to this. My mind was a blank. I wanted to keep it so and to have my time filled for me.

The day after my visit to the Holy Sepulchre a drive to the Dead Sea and the Jordan was scheduled. We started after breakfast, accompanied by an escort of ten native sheiks. They were a gorgeous sight in their coloured draperies on their little Arab horses, so full of fire and spirit. They treated us to fantasia after fantasia, wonderful feats of horsemanship. I for one could not take my eyes from them. I did not need the guide to tell me that they were showing off for our benefit. It was perfectly obvious and incidentally added to the charm

of the exhibition. One handsome fellow, vain of the effect he was producing, carried his foolhardiness to a point that brought my heart into my mouth. They would perform individually, vying to outdo one another, and then would gallop en masse like wild madmen, standing on their horses or swinging from their stirrups, uttering weird shrieks and enjoying their own antics with the naïve abandon of children.

We lost several hours at this pastime. There are only about twenty miles to cover between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, yet we were nearly the whole day reaching it. We caught sight of its dark waters while we were still some distance away. Farther than the eye could see it stretched between the hills, black, motionless, evil-looking as though some devil's spell had been cast on it; no sound, no birds, no fish, not even a buzzing insect; not one living tree, not a leaf nor a weed. Only those twisted branches and trunks of trees, gruesome and horrible, lying like the distorted limbs of giants, sprawling in all directions. Death everywhere, everything dead.

We rode slowly down the hill, then dismounted and walked over the dead trunks to reach the water. I bathed my face and hands in it. It was salty and tasted as smoke smells. The disagreeable taste is the result of chloride of magnesium, as the smoothness and oiliness are caused by chloride of calcium. The salt, collected by evaporation, is a monopoly of the Turkish Government but is regularly smuggled into Jerusalem and sold there by the Bedouins. What adds to the sense of its uncanniness is the property it has which makes it impossible for anything to sink in the Dead Sea. No need to be a swimmer there —one floats and cannot go down!

I should have liked to stay a long time but the guide,

to whom this was all monotonous routine, urged me on with the reminder that we must reach Bethlehem that evening. After another twenty miles in a different direction we arrived late and weary and ready for bed.

One of our Arab escort, the very one indeed who had distinguished himself that morning, was a chief of sorts in Bethlehem. I beheld him the next day in earnest converse with the guide, who appeared to be protesting violently against some proposal that he was making. After a long debate in Arabic they approached me together, still gesticulating, and the guide explained to me that I was the recipient of an invitation from the handsome Bedouin to visit his wife, his mother and the rest of his family and to partake of a native meal. I was delighted and consented at once.

The wife was a pretty creature, with beautiful lustrous brown eyes showing above the inevitable veil. After dinner which consisted of the usual pilaff (rice, mutton, fish) and the eternal rose jam, she signed to me to go with her to her room, and there took off her veil. Oh, sorrow! The nose was wide and flat, the mouth enormous with coarse heavy lips and ugly teeth. What a pity, with those eyes so beautiful! Fortunate for her that the custom of her country demanded the concealment of what was best concealed.

She showed me how she used her paints for the face, and gave me one of her two eyebrow kohl boxes, with sticks for the eyes, one side containing black, the other red paint—such an orange-red as I had never seen before and have never been able to find since. She gave me a Bedouin costume to be photographed in and overwhelmed me with her hospitable kindness. I was evidently as great a curiosity to her as she was to me and

so enchanted was I with the novelty of this experience, this glimpse of the intimate home life of a strange people, that I was sorely tempted to yield to their urgent invitation to stay on. But the guide and my schedule were inexorable and reluctantly I was obliged to remount and set off for Jericho.

Just before I left my agreeable host managed to make clear to me that he would be pleased to accompany me back to France as a permanent bodyguard. I am sure that my emphatic refusal of his offer puzzled as much as it disappointed him.

At Jericho I encountered a party of English tourists with whom I stayed chatting late into the evening. One of the ladies in the party seemed familiar to me though I could not remember where I had met her. They were curious about me; they could not quite make me out. I was obviously French and my name was Mrs. Hopkins! I was travelling simply, yet I seemed to be acquainted with people and places to whose acquaintanceship my unpretentiousness did not entitle me. It amused me to keep them guessing.

At last Lord S., regarding me intently, spoke of a French lady who had helped his wife through her presentation at court. Ah, that was why she had seemed familiar!

"Yes," the lady chimed in, "she was very charming, very helpful with suggestions and advice; but once the ball was well on its way, she left me to myself while she garnered all of the attention. I cannot understand it," she continued plaintively, "I wore an elaborate court dress with jewels and a tiara while her gown was ridiculously simple, with a long silver brocade train which she took off almost at once, no jewels except for

two very large pearl earrings, and only a wreath of natural flowers in her hair. What attraction except oddity could they find in her?"

As it happened, I always wore those earrings and had them on at the moment. She caught sight of them even as she spoke and gasped a little. "I wonder if you happen to know her," she said slowly.

"Oh, yes," I replied easily, "everybody in Paris has seen her somewhere or other."

"Oh, of course," she put in hastily, "I did not think you knew her personally—a lady of such high degree."

"Of course not! How should I?"

But when we parted at one-thirty in the morning, she threw off all pretence and frankly begged: "Do tell us who you are."

I laughed and shook my head. "A pilgrim. Let it go at that."

But the encounter revealed to me the fact that I was in no mood for this or any other kind of pastime. What had I to do with these people? What was I doing here anyway? I had come with a purpose which I had not achieved. Very well. Why not go home now? Why should I go on with this meaningless trip simply because it had been scheduled.

The next morning I wired to Cook's, cancelling my contract, and left the following day for Jerusalem—not, however, before I had had an exquisite swim in the River Jordan. Shades of St. John, what a sacrilege!

At Jerusalem I found a telegram from Cook's Cairo office, confirming my cancellation and my pilgrim's journey was at an end.

But before I left the city I went once more, this time alone, to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Again I

stopped before each oratory, my heart and my hope cold as stone. I stood again before the Sepulchre and looked at the three altars, of which one belonged to my creed. Why mine rather than another? How could I be arrogant enough to believe that the creed in which *I* had been reared was *the* one accredited and sealed with the seal of God! That was the barrier beyond which I could not push my way.

With a sigh of bitter regret I acknowledged that the faith of my childhood had died there. I left in a mood of blank despair and drove to the Mount of Olives. Among the ruins of all I had believed I fell on my knees and begged the God above all creeds to sustain me and to keep my burden from growing heavier than I could bear. I felt stronger and better. My faith in my creed was dead, it is true, but my faith in my God still strong.

CHAPTER XII

Homeward

HAVING some time on my hands before I could get the steamer at Beirut for Cairo, I decided on an excursion to Damascus by the old-fashioned highway diligence with four horses that travelled between that city and Jerusalem. It was a strange ride. I could not endure the promiscuity inside and climbed on to a seat next the driver. Either he was drunk, or the horses or the vehicle! The pace was furious. Level road, uphill, downhill, on we galloped without pause or delay. Around corners on two wheels, righting ourselves as best we could and on again! I held on tight, resigned to the inevitable smash. But the driver's life was charmed and we arrived safely in Baalbeck at nightfall where we changed horses. It was so cold that I purchased there a native burnous to cover me and sought warmth inside the diligence. But the odours drove me again to my perch outside and at the same breakneck speed we drove into Damascus early in the morning.

Never before had I known what aching bones meant. Stiff and sore, I asked for a bath at the hotel and was told that the only bath in Damascus was the public one, where I might procure breakfast as well. Thither I went.

The building was impressive with an elaborate interior and an immense bathing pool. Large comfortable rest rooms, very unlike the narrow little cubbyholes of the European baths, opened off the marble corridors that

lined the pool. They were roofless with only an awning that might be drawn against the sun's rays if they proved too ardent. On the other side the rooms opened into a beautiful walled-in garden. Marble benches and luxurious divans were scattered all about.

I undressed and my clothes were taken from me and put neatly together with a strap around them. I waited for a bathing suit or a sheet or a covering of any sort but it was not forthcoming. I had a little difficulty in making myself understood but finally succeeded in recovering my chemise and, feeling more comfortable, I went out to the pool. Behold the sight! Hundreds of women without a stitch of clothes! Nubians, Circassians, natives, with babies and without, young, old, children, grandmothers, the place swarmed with them. Some were in the pool and some out; some eating, some lounging; having their hair shampooed, their bodies massaged, their faces and arms tattooed. The water, fresh and clean, was constantly forced out and renewed by a tremendous fall at one end of the pool from two openings and, at the other end, which was very deep, it emptied into one of the branches of the Barada River. Its freshness and purity were very tempting.

Realising myself an odd sight in my wisp of French lingerie and certainly having nothing to conceal if it was the custom to conceal nothing, I returned to add my last vestige of clothing to the rest, and into the water I went.

I found a woman with a baby in her arms and some food in her hand and asked her where I might get something to eat. She spoke English a little and, pointing toward the farther end of the garden, she exclaimed: "Good, good, good, eat." Rice, meat that was well-

flavoured and savoury (no *roux*), tea or a native drink of herbs; even whisky and soda if one so desired. Oh, a very up-to-date place indeed! There was singing and dancing, the music weird and unnerving but somehow fascinating.

I must have stayed there for three or four hours which from their viewpoint was a very little while. Some of them spend all day at the baths and even all night.

I was massaged by a heavy, strong negro woman. That black shiny she-devil was a wonder. She knew every art of her trade and revelled in it. She pounded me to a pulp, chanting as she worked, anointed me and left me to a sleep from which I awoke, fresh, cool, strong and rested. When I left I told her that she would make a hit at the Paris Hammam, to which she responded eagerly: "You take me, lady." I smiled, thinking of my Arab sheik and of the effect I should produce in Paris with that handsome bandit and this black, grinning devil at my heels. I had quite enough on my hands, I decided, without additional complications.

Back to Baalbeck in the diligence with a milder driver but, as luck would have it, I found there again my drunken friend, more drunk than ever, at whose side I enjoyed a repetition of that earlier mad drive, this time to Beirut. The steamer was in and an interesting letter from my husband's aunt was waiting for me. She told me of having invited my mother-in-law, my husband and my son to spend Christmas and the New Year at her villa in the Pyrenees. Of course, she continued, she knew that her sister-in-law would not make the journey, but believed that my husband would come with the boy.

"I hope," the letter concluded, "you will soon be back, to put a stop to the wild rumours now current. Why cannot you join us and make it in reality a Merry Christmas and the beginning of a happy New Year?"

Why not indeed? It would be impossible to get there by Christmas but I might arrive in time for the New Year. The proposal sounded attractive. But I knew that I must be prepared for unpleasantness and I decided that I had better not bind myself by promises until I had had an opportunity to see for myself what things had happened during my absence. So I left the letter unanswered.

By a small coastwise steamer I travelled from Beirut to Cairo, where I took the big P. & O. liner from India bound for Plymouth. That voyage was uneventful save for the tragi-comic story of young Patrick O'Donnell, the very charming Irish officer of twenty who was returning to England after two years' military service at Delhi and who for his sins had been introduced to me by mutual friends before we boarded the steamer at Cairo.

I called him Ireland and he was my factotum, my poodle, my willing slave. I am ashamed to say that I abused his devotion thoughtlessly until I awakened with dismay to the fact that he had fallen head over heels in love with me. It was puppy-love, of course, but none the less painful while it lasted.

I tried to ridicule him out of it; told him that it was nonsense, that he must behave, laughed at his highly volcanic poetry. He was hurt to misery and threatened all sorts of stupidities. He would jump overboard, he would kill himself at my stateroom door, he would follow me over the world until I cared for him as he did

for me. He gave me no peace. When I found that I could neither mock nor reason any sense into him, and his sighs and warnings grew gloomier and more frequent so that I really wondered whether he might not commit some folly that would be both absurd and troublesome, I decided on drastic measures to cure him.

We had a couple of days more at sea and I suddenly changed my tactics.

"Yes," I admitted, "I have been cruel not to listen to you. I have wanted to, you must know, and it has not been easy to steel myself against the temptation."

The delight of the poor lad, a bonny lad at that, tall, slender, fair, with big sparkling blue eyes. I was touched by the sudden radiance of his smile, but I hardened my heart.

I sighed, and I dare say I blushed. At any rate, I was convincing and, giving him my hand, I told him: "My stateroom at eleven."

Need I say that he was there promptly! I received him in a fluffy teagown, with the lights dimmed. I gave him my two hands and he tried to draw me toward him.

"Oh, don't!" I exclaimed. "It hurts." And releasing myself, I turned on all the lights in the room and stood in the full glare of the blaze.

"Ireland," I said, "now that I know you really love me and I love you, I must make you a terrible confession. What has kept me from you all these days—I am convinced now that you won't mind—is this: I am only a patched-up wreck. This arm was cut off and replaced by an artificial limb; the right leg too. My teeth all come out. I have not one of my own in my mouth."

The poor boy's face all but put an end to the farce then and there; bewilderment, incredulity, wildest dismay on the one hand and a brave effort to conceal his conflicting emotions on the other. I was torn between tears and mirth, but I went steadily on. "I am absolutely bald too," and putting my left hand to my eye, "See, it comes out." But with that he was gone, and until I landed and after I landed I never caught sight of him again. To be sure, the last two days were rough and stormy and though he had often boasted boyishly of his good seamanship, perhaps it was not so good as he would have liked me to believe. In any event, after that memorable evening he disappeared as completely as though the sea had swallowed him.

The train was waiting at Portsmouth to take me to London and at London there was a letter from my husband that had been re-directed from Cairo. It told me that he was going to his aunt's in the Pyrenees, and had left with his lawyers instructions to transfer the legal separation I had exacted into a divorce, but that he would take action in the matter only when I notified him of my return.

Here was a situation which demanded all my wit and self-possession. Conscious of my singleness of purpose throughout this entire Jerusalem trip, to which I had adhered with a passionate sincerity, I was equally conscious that a simple statement to that effect would be met with open sneers and lifted eyebrows. This was no battle to be conducted in the open. I must step warily and as cleverly as I knew how.

My spirits rose to the conflict and like a general I marshalled my forces and planned my campaign.

That night I crossed to Paris. Arriving at my

mother-in-law's dwelling, after communicating with the faithful Clothilde I sought the tiger in her den. She was, as usual, suavely detestable.

"So you have come back," she greeted me.

"Yes, dear mother, ahead of time."

"Converted, I presume?"

"Absolutely, as to facts," I answered. "And I am perfectly determined to set wrong right."

She did not quite know what to make of that assertion, so she shifted and asked me what my plans were. I knew that I was fencing with a formidable opponent and I enjoyed it. I answered that I did not quite know yet what I intended to do; that I might go to my parents the next day or that I might stay on with her.

"How is the boy?" I asked.

"Oh, very well when I saw him last. He has gone visiting with his father. They will be back next week." She made no move to tell me where they were and I gave her no intimation that I knew. She might have telegraphed to my husband which would have upset my programme completely. She sent for her secretary at that point and off I went, calling: "Until to-night."

I went to Cook's office and consulted a directory from which I took the names and addresses of six attorneys. I knew none of them nor even the technical difference between *notaire*, *avoué* and *avocat*. But I drove to the first address on my list and up to the office I went. The lawyer was bowing out a client. With outstretched hand, I said:

"Dear M. Pérard, I don't know you at all and you don't know me, but I want to give you, probably, a divorce case."

If there was to be a divorce, I was ready for it. But

I was grimly determined that it should not be given to my husband. My own claim to it was at least equally good and I was prepared to back it against his.

M. Pérard smiled at what he termed this proposal *à l'Américaine*. For two hours or more I led him through the maze, told him the whole truth, beginning with my marriage and omitting nothing that I knew, either of my own recklessness or of my husband's follies. He advised me to join Herbert on the strength of his aunt's invitation and not to acknowledge the receipt of his last letter to me. An apparent reconciliation would further my cause and after that we might sit back and wait for my husband's next move. He assured me of his interest and good will. I agreed to follow his advice, and we shook hands on the bargain.

I went back to the Hôtel and told my maid to pack a trunk for Belgium, and have it taken to the *Gare du Nord*. I did not want to take even Clothilde into my confidence. Meanwhile I packed a big valise with the clothes I should need at Pau and, leaving a note for my mother-in-law to say that I was off to Argenteau, I departed for the *Gare d'Orléans*. There, before taking my train, I arranged for the safekeeping of the trunk that poor Clothilde had so carefully packed and which would wait for me in vain at the *Gare du Nord*. Intrigue? Of course. It was the weapon to which I had been trained and which I could handle with the best possible effect.

The next morning we reached Bordeaux and I could not resist the temptation of stopping off at Arcachon, that lovely spot on the bay formed by the Gulf of Gascogne, surrounded by pine trees, where we used to go every summer for a month or so but which I had not

seen since I was eight years old. I stayed there all afternoon, bathing and lounging on the beach in the balmy sunshine.

Quite early on the following morning I arrived in Pau but timed my arrival at the Villa for shortly before noon. The two daughters of the house raced from the tennis courts to greet me and my boy ran along with them. I caught him in my arms and so confronted my bewildered and embarrassed husband. Smilingly I told him how delightful it was to see him again, but even this failed to put him at his ease. The situation was relieved by the arrival on the scene of another cousin. Herbert took advantage of the opportunity to recover his composure and regain his speaking faculties.

Aunt Sonier was out with her sister and husband, but would return for lunch. When the first excitement of my arrival had subsided, the players went back to their game and left me with my husband and son. He continued hesitant and ill at ease, responding to my direct attack with evasive and fumbling replies. He had heard things—people had said—no, he had no proof—and some mumbled reference to a divorce.

At last I said: "Herbert, there is nothing in all this. You have listened to rumours and your very attitude of belief has confirmed them. If you want a divorce, well and good. But remember that it was I who obtained the separation from you and do not forget the events which led to it."

"But what do you want me to do?" he stammered.

"If you take my advice, you will forget these stories and let the world see that you recognise your mistake."

"But—my mother—I promised her—to be resentful—"

Of course! That was where the shoe pinched! Had I not known it all along!

"Oh, your mother," I interrupted. "That part of it is all right. I saw her in Paris and she is the first to whom we must prove the truth."

At that the poor man turned tail in utter relief. He had no desire for a divorce; he did not want the bother of it. He admitted that he had no ground for action but hearsay and that the whole thing would involve him in more disturbance than it was worth. His mother had so persecuted him to instigate divorce proceedings that he had written the letter I had received in London (though I did not tell him so) and his mother had taken it from him to mail with her own hands. But if I had seen his mother, it was all right. He was glad to be rid of the affair so easily.

I grimaced a little at the nonchalance with which he washed his hands of me, but I was content. It had been a battle of wits and I had won. Had I been pitted against Herbert alone I might have been ashamed of a shabby victory. As it was, I thought of Armande and gloried in my triumph. But my heart turned a little sick. This was not the end and well I knew it. And knew also that the coveted guerdon of this war between us was neither her son nor my reputation but Antoine to whom she was passionately devoted.

We stayed at the Villa five or six days and returned together to Paris. Herbert made the family New Year's calls with me and accompanied me to the opera, where every lorgnette in the house was focussed on our box. I have never enjoyed an evening more. I bowed and smiled in bland response to the cordial greetings with which I was showered and ignored with equal suavity the curious glances turned in my direction.

CHAPTER XIII

I Leave My Husband

I SAW my lawyer and told him how peaceful we were. But, like most lawyers, he was not over-optimistic, prophesied that it would not last and suggested that I ask my husband for a written statement to the effect that he believed his earlier suspicions of me to have been unfounded.

I was reluctant to do this. It seemed both ungracious and unwise to reopen a sore wound. But it took little persuasion to convince me that my position was far from secure, that the attack might be renewed at any moment and that it would be well to arm myself as completely as possible. An opportunity to ask for this exoneration occurred the very next day.

We had visited an aunt who was also Vivien's aunt by marriage and her very staunch champion. I stayed a few moments after my husband had left us and she immediately began pouring into my ears complaints of the havoc I had wrought in Vivien's life. From her viewpoint she was entirely justified and I knew that my case, even if I cared to put it, would be a feeble one. I therefore made no effort to stem the torrent but when she had finished, I said quietly: "I hope, my aunt, that all these unnecessary emotions won't make you ill. I am sorry for Vivien but she has made an idol of her husband and has only herself to thank if he is tired of it."

This incident gave me my reason to approach my husband. "I cannot go on like this," I told him. "I am open to this sort of attack wherever I go and I must have something substantial to oppose to it. If you really believe in me, as you say you do, will you put your belief into writing so that I may have some proof to show that you at any rate do not think me the black sheep I am painted?"

I had no idea, of course, of using this document as a banner to wave before the noses of the old *douairières* who disapproved of me, but I salved my conscience with the arguments that M. Pérard had given me and my husband wrote for me a very generous retraction of his earlier reproaches. "I have humbly to beg your pardon for having permitted any one to cast a blame or doubt, as I have none."

With this document I went to the lawyer's a day or two later. Rubbing his glasses, which I had learned was a sign of satisfaction with him, he said, smiling: "C'est parfait. The young man is muzzled. Give him no new grounds on which to make trouble. Now you must decide what you intend to do."

I told him that I did not know; that my husband and I lived as much apart as though we were separated by hundreds of miles; that society wearied me; that my pilgrimage, far from having proved a solution, had knocked from under me the only prop of hope I had had and that I was simply allowing matters to take their course.

As I left his office, I allowed the thoughts of Fitz James which I had kept so long at bay to rush unchecked through my mind. He was in the country, keeping his end of our bargain with each other. So long as he con-

sented to remain safely anchored there, we might jog along. But what would happen at his next cry of distress I did not dare to think. My passions clamoured for release; but ranged against them were two powerful allies: my son and that standard of honour which Baddy and my early training had given me and which, however deliberately I may have abandoned it, I never hauled down from the height where it floated. I did not always regulate my conduct by it but I never demeaned it for the purpose of condoning anything I did.

When I returned home my husband gave me a letter he had just received from my mother:

"Your father-in-law is seriously ill. Rose (my Christian name which I hated and used as little as possible) should know of it but she should know too that her father has forbidden me on two separate occasions to speak of her to him; that the smallest excitement may be fatal and that it is a question of life or death to oppose his will at the moment. His heart has taken a turn for the worse and there are alarming complications.

"I make you responsible for whatever ill effects may result from the slightest opposition to his wishes."

I had known for some time that my father's heart was not sound. "I shall not make old bones, my dear," he had said to me when I had seen him last.

But I did not believe my mother's letter. Never for a moment did I believe that it was by my father's wish I was exiled. Whether she was exaggerating his illness as a pretext to ensure my absence from Argenteau I could not decide. In any event, it had quite the contrary effect. I must be in Paris for the marriage of Eli, my husband's younger brother. After that, with permission or without, I should see my father.

At the *contrat de mariage* reception some one told me that my husband was to play in a big poker game the following evening and hinted at mysterious developments.

The next day was the church wedding, a brilliant affair at St. Clothilde, where I met one or two of my husband's club cronies. I inquired casually whether there was a big game scheduled for the near future.

"Yes, for to-night," was the answer. "Two Roumanians and an Italian are ready to go the limit."

And the other added jocularly: "Poor Herbert is going to be plucked again." I turned from them to come face to face with Fitz James.

He found an opportunity to whisper that he must see me alone and I told him that I would meet him two days later at one of the lakes of the Avenue des Acacias.

The crisis was approaching swiftly and inevitably. There was nothing to be gained by fencing and by playing the ostrich. I had now definitely to make my choice of the roads that lay before me.

I chose that Herbert and I should have one final chance together. Knowing him, I knew also just how slim the chance was. But I owed it to myself and to my son, if not to my husband, to make this last effort at reconciliation. If it failed I was through. Never, having written *finis* to a chapter in my life, have I felt any inclination to turn back the pages.

I found my husband and told him that I had received a telegram inviting us to Signy. I had received neither telegram nor invitation but I could have arranged all that. I should even have given up my appointment in the Avenue des Acacias if he had consented to come.

"How would it be to leave to-night and spend a few days there? You would enjoy the shooting and I should love to go."

He caught his moustache, twisted it with his fingers, gnawed it in his teeth. Trapped and annoyed at being trapped, he stammered: "You go. It's all right. I will join you to-morrow, later. But go, by all means. I can't. I absolutely can't manage it to-night. To-morrow will be all right."

I felt a sudden throb of pity. This passion for gambling! How it consumed him!

"Herbert," I said, emphasising my words, speaking very slowly, "come to-night or you will never come. Nor will you ever come again where I am. I know why you will not go to-night and I am trying to take you away in time. Once again and for the last time: will you come?"

"No! Leave me in peace! It bothers me, in the end not even to be at liberty to go to the club. Zut!" And off he went.

This then was my answer, the ultimate confirmation of a fact with which I had long been familiar. He regarded me not as his wife—God save the mark!—not even as another human being. But as a cow to be milked for money. I existed for him only when he had gambling debts to pay and when there was a possibility that I might pay them.

I went to the Jockey Club where I found Constantin Le Gonidec, and asked him to watch the game closely that night and to report to me exactly what happened. "It is a life and death matter," I told him. "I must have facts and truths on which to act, not this one's lies

or that one's. Call me up at any time during the night."

My husband, miraculously, came home to dinner. His brother and sister-in-law were there as well and the evening passed quietly. He tried to avoid seeing me alone but as he was leaving with his brother at eleven, I called him aside.

"Herbert, it is once more and for the last time the end. If you lose, who will pay? Remember, I will not! Never! Not one penny!"

His answer was the vulgarest and filthiest word in the French language and he was gone, running down the stairway.

At four in the morning the telephone rang.

"Herbert has lost seventy-five thousand francs on seventy thousand I O U's. Further credit is refused. He had to give up his place to another player."

"Merci, cher ami." A little dazed now that the end had actually come, I hung up the receiver.

I called Clothilde and made preparations to leave the next morning with my baby and his nurse for a religious retreat I knew of where I could engage a few rooms and stay for a week or two. That would give me breathing space. I was determined to stay no longer at my mother-in-law's, and I wished to be where my cousin could not reach me too easily. I was convinced that he was my destiny and that sooner or later I should go to him. But there was my son. I passionately desired to keep him. His father had no interest in him but his grandmother, rich, shrewd and powerful, would move heaven and earth to get him into her possession. I must be careful not to play into her hands.

I intended to sue for a divorce. It would be a comparatively simple procedure. To procure a divorce when a legal separation already existed and the persons involved had lived apart for a certain length of time was largely a matter of form. The tribunal's action in such cases was rapid and almost always favourable. What came after would depend on what Fitz James revealed to me the following day and in the meantime I must have a harbour.

I wrote to my father and mother a letter that held all my urgent need. I told them why I had left my husband, begged them no longer to exact his presence as the condition of mine and to send me the wire for which I longed and which would bring Antoine and me by the next train.

I went as I had promised to the little secluded lake in the Avenue des Acacias. He came on horseback, I alone in my Panhard auto. I had been the first woman in Paris to secure a license to drive. Never did my chauffeur drive when I used the car.

For me the meeting, as had been all our meetings, was a Calvary; yet it was good, ah, so good, to see him, to feel him mine. I wanted only to lean my tormented frame, my distracted head against his tall strength and feel myself secure in his love.

We walked to a shaded, sheltered bench near the lake and sat down among the flowers and swans and ducks.

"Ma pauvre Piche, toujours la même histoire!" he began.

"Do you know about last night?"

He nodded. "I was there," he said, "and saw. Constantin Le Gonidec did what he could to take him away

and we all watched hard to see if there was any crooked work with those newcomers. But there was nothing to be seen, though I shall always have my doubts; apparently it was only continuous good luck and keen, clever playing on their part. But Herbert grew nervous and reckless, playing *le tout pour le tout* and it was only when further funds on his I O U were refused him that he gave up his place. He was still at the club this morning at eight o'clock. Now," he concluded, "are you going to continue to live with him?"

"Please don't press me," I pleaded, "but tell me all about yourself since you came back from Egypt."

He told me that he had returned from Cairo as fast as boat and train could take him, missing no connection, arriving in Paris on a Sunday morning. He went with his wife to mass at St. Clothilde, where any one who was interested might see them together. Then they went together to the races where they met my husband. He avoided them but Fitz James waylaid him as he was placing a bet with a bookmaker and Herbert had no choice but to cut or greet him. Failing either the courage or the inclination for the former, he allowed Fitz James to take his arm and they walked off together.

"I must say," Fitz James continued, "he tried his best to find a pretext to shake me off but I stuck. I presented my young nephew to him, who had just returned from his military service, and we all three watched the races together. It was only when we came to the foot of the stairs leading to the club stand that I let him go. By that time we had been twenty minutes together, in full view of every one, and I had accomplished my purpose.

"That evening I attended a reception with my wife

and after reaching home and bidding her good-night I was about to go up to my bedroom. For you must know," he added, "what I have never told you yet, that for more than two years I have not lived with Vivien. I have had an apartment upstairs which has been my home; the only time I have spent with her has been in dining or attending some public function.

"As I said good-night, she interrupted me demurely:

" 'While you were away I had all the rooms painted and those dismal draperies taken out of your sitting room. There is no furniture upstairs at all now, so you had better resign yourself as a dutiful husband should after such a long absence, and be content with the hospitality of my room.'

"For a moment I was incredulous but as I saw that she stood her ground I flew into a towering rage. She had told me before I left that she intended to go into a convent for a month or two and I had locked up all my treasures—your letters and photographs—in my secretary, never dreaming they would be molested there.

" 'What have you dared to do, you miserable little wretch?' I shouted at her. 'You were careful to wait until I was thousands of miles away before you began your precious meddling. What about the convent where you were going to spend your time? A pretty story, little saint!'

" 'I did go to the convent but when I was shown the article in *Le Figaro* by Aunt de Contades, I went home with her and had your rooms opened by her advice.'

" 'What have you done with my papers?' I fairly bellowed at her.

" 'Oh,' she sneered, 'you are anxious about your

THE AUTHOR AT ABOUT THE TIME OF HER DIVORCE.

THE AUTHOR IN A CHARACTERISTIC COSTUME OF THE PERIOD.

friend's correspondence and photographs? We looked through everything. Most of the rubbish we burnt and some things were given to my lawyer for safekeeping and, perhaps, for use. Who knows? You might make it necessary. Now do as you see fit. It is for you to choose between your wife or—'

"I stopped her there. I was in a mood to kill and told her that her safety lay in my going. I stayed that night at the Club and the next morning went to see Father DuLac, her spiritual adviser. He knows life, has great influence over her and is a man of broad ideas. I told him as much of the truth as I thought necessary and that I was going away for three or four days.

"On my return I found Vivien very much subdued. She inquired meekly if I would go out with her that evening. She did not want our estrangement made public or talked about. I told her that if she would rearrange the rooms upstairs as they had been and replace in the desk all that had been taken out, I would continue to live under the same roof with her, that I would consent to nothing more than that under any circumstances and that, unless she agreed to my conditions, I should leave her at once and not return.

"She wept and protested but to no avail. It was my ultimatum.

"Knowing that I had the upper hand I went to Le Gonidec's place for three days more and when I appeared again it was a very amiable little lady who greeted me. She assured me that what she had done had been done on Mme. de Contades' advice and because she had been persuaded of its wisdom. I found my rooms repapered—not as they had been of course,

that was impossible—but she had shown her good will. Yet I will never forgive her for desecrating my sanctuary.

"Again we went over the situation and again I made it perfectly clear that I had no inclination and no intention of living with her as her husband. When she saw that her tears produced no effect she agreed in writing to the separation that had actually existed for over two years. But we were to maintain a surface amity for the benefit of society and she assured me that she would never consent to a divorce. 'Unless,' she added sweetly, 'you should be found *en flagrant delit* so as to make marriage with your partner impossible.'

"I bowed. 'Whenever that occurs, madame, I promise you that it will not be with Madame la Marquise.'

"'I fear no other,' was her reply and on that we parted.

"Now, Piche mine, you have the whole history since my return. What about you?"

I told him everything, explaining as well as I could my experiences in Jerusalem and the total failure of my expedition; my return, my meeting with Herbert and the hollowness of our reconciliation; the struggle to be content with my lot and the collapse of that house of cards with last night's baccarat game. Then I told him of my retreat to the convent and of the letter to my parents, on whose reply my next movements would depend. If it were in the affirmative, I should leave immediately for Argenteau with Antoine. If not,—I might still go to Argenteau. I could not tell. Or else remain at the convent until I could decide what was the next step to be taken.

"Won't you have your separation transformed into a

divorce after all this?" he asked hotly. "You can't go on living as you are now, as you have been all these last terrible years."

Rising from our bench, my hand in his, I said: "No, it is finished. Last night saw its ugly termination. To-morrow I will go to my lawyer and ask him to bring suit for divorce."

I found myself clasped in his arms. Pressed close to his heart and lips, I heard him murmur: "By your next birthday we will be married. I will get my divorce somehow and claim you mine in the eyes of the world, as you have been mine always; to-day, yesterday and before; you were born to be mine. We were put in this world to be together." This was sweet to hear. Oh, this was what I wanted!

"But she will never consent to a divorce," I ventured, waiting to be contradicted.

"No, she will not consent to an arranged divorce; but she is very proud and will not hesitate to bring suit on 'sufficient grounds.' The grounds must be made sufficient, that is all. I will think it over and let you know what happens."

Divorce for both of us meant to me that I might keep my lover and my son—little else besides. No need to choose between them. With the passing of that horror which had been darkening my path whichever way I turned, passed all my doubts and unhappiness. The road before me was clear.

He caught me again in a close embrace. Then, with his arm passed through his horse's bridle, he took me to my little Panhard. It was late and quite dark, except for the gay lights of the Park that had begun to glimmer through the trees.

"À quand?" he asked.

"I will leave a note for you at the Club. It will not be long."

A radiant "Au revoir," and we parted. Buoyant with joy, I put the third speed on the car.

CHAPTER XIV

My Father Dies

THERE was no telegram from home when I returned to the convent, but the next morning brought a letter from my mother, saying it was her sad duty to forbid my coming, even with my son, if the Marquis did not come as well, adding that my father was ill and that no one could see him. Once more she said: "We do not wish you to come, even with the Marquis, until your father's condition is better."

That same evening's train took me to Belgium. I walked up the high, winding hill and looked with love at the dear old place, the fairy flower grounds with avenues on either side which led to the front door. With so many windows commanding the drive, some one must have seen me coming. I rang but there was no reply. Presently from the side of the house came old Louis, who had been my father's valet and was now the butler. With tears in his eyes he greeted me.

"Your father is very, very ill. The Countess will not allow anyone in but the doctors and the Curé. She saw you coming and refuses to receive you. With the positive orders I have I cannot open the door. But even if you do go in, you will never get to your father's bedside."

The old man had been with my father since his mar-

riage, and I loved him and knew that he was devoted to me.

"Louis, I cannot ask you to oppose my mother's orders. But wait. I shall get to my father somehow."

I went to the Curé's house. He told me that my mother had returned posthaste from Russia about a month before when my father had been taken ill and that a few days later she had isolated him, denying him to any caller. She and Poswick, a mean and oily sycophant, who had been my mother's factotum and confidential agent for a number of years, were managing affairs in their own fashion. He used the word "influence" and then recalled it.

"I am sorry to have used it," he said. "You must not see matters in perhaps a worse light than they are. But certainly something strange must be going on."

He was going to call that day and I told him that I should go with him; that once in, I should manage. He made no objection and we set off, approaching the house from the side and ringing at the side entrance. A new footman admitted the Curé. Never having seen me before and seeing me now with him, he admitted me as well. When we reached the double doors of the upper corridor leading to the rooms on that side of the Château, the Curé rang a bell and knocked. There was no answer. He tried the doors and found them bolted; then knocked again—knocked repeatedly. Finally, my mother herself unlocked the door. I stood so that she could not see me.

"Do not come in this evening, my Father," she said to the Curé. "He has had a relapse, but he is quiet now. I think it is my duty to ask you to come soon and give him the last rites."

I stepped forward, pushing aside the poor Curé who vanished, and holding open the door that my mother was trying to close. She grew white.

"You are committing a crime," she said. "Your father forbade me to let you in. He considers you are a disgrace to us. Your actions have barred you from our roof, from the right of entering even. Your insistence is simply murder."

Pushing her aside with one arm and holding the door open with the other, I cried indignantly: "Father will have to tell me so himself. Until then, for me, it is you and you alone who are keeping me from—"

From three doors further down the hall, a tall, pale shadow emerged, crying eagerly: "Mimi, ma Mimi! Why do you come so late? Nearly too late?"

And in tears, as I am now while I write, I ran to him and fell at his dear feet. My mother followed, insisting that the excitement was hurtful to him, that I must go now, that I might see him later, and more in the same strain.

"No! Now!" he interrupted sternly, and she was forced to submit.

Rising to my feet, I led him to the armchair from which, suffering and weak, he had managed to raise himself when he heard my voice. I knelt at his side and poured out my despair, the reasons for my absence, the wires, the letters forbidding me to come. He stroked my head that was at the level of his chair-arm and, ringing the bell at his side, he told me: "You are here to stay with me to the end." And to Louis, who answered his summons and seemed petrified to see me there: "Watch well and for one hour do not let anyone at all come anywhere near here. Lock the doors.

Above all, do not let the Countess or Poswick pass the double door in the corridor. Now go and do as I say. For one hour."

Then he talked low and rapidly, breathing hard, stopping now and again to recover his breath, resorting to a smelling-salts bottle every few moments. I held my ear close to his lips in order to miss nothing.

He told me first of the unhappiness of his married life, of my mother's domination over him by the sheer force of her will to which he had yielded again and again for the sake of peace, of this final isolation into which he had been forced by her and Poswick and two other satellites who had returned with her from Russia.

Then, his agitation increasing, he told me of the great anger which had seized him when, after my birth, my mother made it impossible to bear him the son he longed for. He could not divorce her; there was no divorce in either France or Belgium at that time. He had left home and stayed away for months, travelling about the world, until in America he had fallen deeply in love with a very young girl. Ignorant of his marriage and loving him with all the generosity of her youth, she had yielded to his ardour and they had been very happy together until she had told him that a child was to be born to her. He had confessed his deception then and she had sent him away but her memory and that of the son she had borne had haunted him with regret and remorse all his days.

He could not die in peace without making some attempt at amends. There was nothing he could do for her; she had refused scornfully to let him provide for her when he left. But there was the boy. He

THE AUTHOR'S FATHER.

A CORNER IN THE BEDROOM OF THE AUTHOR'S FATHER SHOWING THE CHAIR IN WHICH HE SAT WHEN HE MADE HIS DYING CONFESSION TO HIS DAUGHTER.

owed the boy something. Would I undertake to find him and deliver to him a certain sum of money which he had put aside for that purpose?

His eyes were full of anguish as he made his request and, my heart aching for him, I kissed his hands again and again and promised to regard his wishes as sacred orders. I gave him my word of honour to carry out the mission entrusted to me. Giving me a key, one of several that were attached to the platinum chain he wore, he indicated a secret drawer where I should find instructions and documents to help me in my search.

By that time my mother's knocks on the outer door were incessant. "The doctors," she called, "the doctors."

My father kissed me good-bye and, holding my head in his two hands and looking deep into my eyes, he said: "I am glad you came, and that you are here. Go now and open the door."

When they came in, my father fainted, and both the doctors and my mother told me that I was the direct cause of his death. They sent for the Curé, but my father had already recovered when he arrived. I was sobbing my heart out in a corner while they busied themselves about him. As soon as he came out of his fainting spell he asked: "Où est Mimi?"

I heard him and ran to his side, crying: "Here. Always here."

He received the last rites in the early morning, his mind clear, and followed the anointments, praying. He lived throughout that day and night and the following morning, but the evening called his dear soul to the rest it had not known in life. My hand was in

his when he died. My mother was at his other side. When the doctor told us that he had breathed his last, my mother said in her cold melodious voice:

"I desire to be left entirely alone with my husband for one half hour."

We went into the next room and when she joined us her face was set and severe. Coldly she said to me: "You may take charge of all the arrangements. I will retire to my wing, you may stay in the west wing. I shall have my meals at eight, twelve and seven; you may have yours before or after. But while the funeral and family matters are being settled I will not see you; nor will I ever do so again of my own free will. Good-bye." And sweeping her long black robe past us, she went downstairs. I never saw her alive again.

I went back to my father's side with Louis. Kneeling to kiss his hand, I noticed that the three big rings that he always wore were missing as well as the bunch of keys and the chain from which he had taken the one for me.

I left him when the priests and sisters came to prepare him for his long rest. When I returned he was lying on his bed, robed in his white nightgown, his hands crossed on his breast, holding the crucifix and beads that he always carried with him. The candles were burning and he seemed to have found peace in that death which is so often and—as it has always seemed to me—so foolishly dreaded. I brought one of the glorious black-red roses he had loved and placed it between his fingers, and with a kiss on his dear forehead and a fervent prayer, I left him to the priests and the nuns and to the endless procession of people who came from everywhere to pay their last respects.

Telegrams had been sent by the major domo to all the members of the family who soon began to flock in. I had sent four telegrams myself when I left my father's side after his death; one to my husband asking him to come by the next train (my break with him was too new and unaccustomed to make it possible for me to ignore him now); one to the convent head; one to my maid and Emilie, telling them to bring my son to Argenteau; and finally one to Fitz James to let him know what had happened.

During the two and a half days that elapsed before the funeral I had my meals upstairs in order to avoid the visitors. I never saw my mother, either in my father's room or elsewhere. I sent Louis to meet my son on his arrival and in due time he reached the château. By the private door that went through my father's bathroom I took him to see his grandfather whom he had never known. He had been only four months old when we left and had not returned since.

The many lighted candles, the people passing reverently, sprinkling holy water and bending their knees in prayer, the darkness of the draperies on the walls and windows of the big room, the smell of incense and flowers, I think awed him a little. It was the first time he had seen death. (He must have seen it often enough lately, distorted and terrible, on the battlefields of the war). He tightened his hold on me and hid his face in my neck.

"It is grandpapa, darling," I said. "He is sleeping a long sleep. Don't you want to kiss him good-night?"

He quivered and looked again. By that time I was near the bed, holding him over my father. The dear little fellow, opening his arms and bending closer, said:

"Bon soir, bon papa!" and kissed my father's forehead. Waving his hand, smiling now, no longer distressed, he cried: "Grandpapa did not wake up at all, did he? Is it not yet time for him to get up?" And then he asked me why there were so many people about and so many candles and why it was all so dark. "Does he do like that every day? You don't. Grandma Armande doesn't."

I kissed him, loved him, and, taking him to the balcony of my sitting room, I tried to make him realise the greatness of death. But I soon saw that I was on the road of the Baddy-Balaklava-eternity incident and stopped—fortunately, in time. I diverted his mind to a passing train and to the pony and the Guernseys in the paddock.

The funeral took place the next day. My son and I walked to the family vault in the little chapel in the Park, about an hour from the château, and a long stream of relatives and friends, acquaintances and strangers, labourers and servants, followed to pay a last tribute to my father. But my husband was not there, nor my mother. She and her three satellites watched the procession from the windows of her wing of the château.

As I was leaving the vault and reached the upper level of the chapel Fitz James's hand came out to me and he said simply: "I know the misery you are going through." He must have left then, as I did not see him again, either there or at the house.

I drove home and the first thing that was handed to me as I entered was a legal paper, requesting me to comply with my father's will; to leave my mother in sole occupancy of the house or, if I wished to reserve

rooms there, to keep closely to my own apartment until the estate should be settled.

I telephoned to my lawyer to come with another attorney whom I named, and with the village notary, who had my father's latest will, made a month previously. The lawyer arrived with the old one which had been given into his safekeeping two years before, but which was nullified by the later document that consisted of a very few words: the formal preliminaries and then: "I leave to my beloved daughter all that the law does not permit me to deed to my devoted wife to whom I bequeath all I own, within the law, etc., etc., etc."

So that was why my father had been so closely guarded and isolated. That was why!

I asked my counsel: "Have I to leave here?"

"No," he answered emphatically. "Your share is just one-half of everything. But your mother, by this last will, has the prior right to choose her share; she may select or exchange or buy as she likes and you must take what is left."

"Well," I said, "have it all settled as quickly as possible, so that I shall know where I stand."

A conference was decided on for the next day but one between the two heirs and their counsel to arrange the division of the property. My mother did not come. Instead, there were present to represent her her lawyer, a notary, the detestable Poswick and another of his lot. I was there with my notary and counsel. Such ridiculous figures were placed on the articles chosen by my mother that I could not help smiling at the absurdity of it. Her interpretation of the will meant that she would take during her lifetime Argenteau and

all its contents; and that half of all the cash and bonds was hers after she had first deducted as her personal property the *dot* she had brought her husband at marriage. The jewels she claimed as her own.

"What about the furniture, silver, paintings, *objets d'art*?" I asked. "Those that do not belong here but were brought from the Paris house when it was turned over to me?"

"Oh," said her attorneys, "they are included in Argenteau and go with it, for her use as long as she lives, but she cannot dispose of them."

The only division to be effected, therefore, was of the actual deposits in banks and this only after my mother had satisfied all her claims.

Turning to my notary, I asked: "Is this the law, according to its letter?"

He smiled: "It is a very individual and special interpretation of it. But this will need not stand. You can, of course, refuse to acknowledge it and have it broken; and you can also have an exact appraisement made by competent experts of every article that composes your father's estate. You have as much right as your mother to live here until all these questions are settled. Until then, until the final liquidation is accomplished, everything remains *in statu quo*."

I did not wish to contest the will but I decided that an appraisal of the property would be a wise and necessary procedure and signified my approval of this arrangement. Poswick ran out to take my mother the news of my decision and her lawyer evidently told her that she could not do otherwise than agree, for a paper came back signed to that effect. As Poswick reached out to dip his pen in the ink for a necessary signature,

I saw to my dismay and disgust that the famous emerald ring my father had always worn was on the finger of this contemptible lackey. I could not control my anger. With as much scorn in my eyes and voice as I was capable of, looking first at the ring and then at him, I said distinctly: "C'est ignoble." He perfectly understood.

A note from my mother requested me to stay as short a time as possible. She would leave in September for Russia where she would stay until the first of April. She would have her wing sealed when she left and I might use the rest of the place during her absence.

She went on to say that my "scandalous refusal" to comply with my father's last wishes put the final touch to my "life of revolt and my undutifulness"; that no punishment I could suffer would be enough to repay my lack of filial submission; and that my decision to have an appraisal made of my father's belongings was an insult and an outrage. She would never forgive me but she might be more lenient in the future if I at once accepted the terms of my father's will and the conditions she had dictated within its limits. She wished to be alone in the house for the present and asked me again to go as soon as it was convenient. This missive was written in her own handwriting and signed: "Your mother."

I telephoned for my lawyer and to a very great and powerful friend of mine, the *Procureur du Roy*, who accepted my invitation to come that evening to supper. The evidence that my mother had planned and arranged and practically compelled my father to execute this last will seemed undeniable. The provisions of the earlier one, dated only two years before, were quite

different. Among other things I was asked to invite my mother to Argenteau from time to time, on condition that none of her Russian friends should accompany her. "Not one" had been added emphatically.

The *Procureur du Roy* advised me to contest this last document, evidently made when my father was not able to write for himself. But I would not. He warned me then to leave a responsible agent at Argenteau to guard my interests when I left. The appraisal would last from eighteen months to two years and during those long months my mother might possibly come to see things differently.

So I wrote her that I was leaving the next day until September, when I would come and stay till she advised me of the date of her return from Russia, and that I should like to see her before I went. I sent this message by my son but she would not see him. A half-hour later the answer was given me by Louis, who incidentally told me that my mother no longer needed his services and had dismissed him.

"All right, Louis," I told him. "You stay here for me. See that things are not tampered with and if anything at all looks queer, telephone at once for the *notaire*."

Follows my mother's answer:

"Rose, I will leave the first of September. I have no wish to see you, and never will. I observe that you are still carrying on your rebellion. May it bring you all the luck you deserve. Your mother."

CHAPTER XV

Disillusion

SO off I went with my son, after settling all things as well as could be under the circumstances. I went back to the convent where I wished to arrange to stay until September. But those good peaceful souls had had enough of the agitation and flurry that our occupancy meant. They very sweetly pointed out that theirs was a retreat and that during the twelve days I had had possession of the rooms, I had been in them two. Would it not be better to give them up altogether? I found they were perfectly justified and, besides, what did it matter? I could find another place in which to live.

I spent two or three days looking round—Auteuil, Neuilly, Passy—for a pretty, comfortable house. I found an ideal place on the borders of the Seine, shaded by fine, large trees. It looked lost, separated from everything, yet a station was but two minutes' walk away, and a car line at the next corner of the avenue. I could rent or buy it at once, and I did the latter.

I sent Clothilde with a note to my mother-in-law, asking that I be allowed to remove my furniture and other belongings from the apartments I had occupied in her house. She flatly refused to permit anything to be taken away, so I went to a furniture store and bought all that I needed, supplementing it later with the curios and lovely odd pieces I had collected on my honeymoon

and which had lain ever since in their unopened packing cases. And at last I was able to make use of the mushrebiyas from the Sultan's harem.

During my last few days at the convent my husband came three times to see me. He tried to explain why he had not attended my father's funeral. It was a rather delicate situation—he could not stand emotion—it—ah—affected him too deeply. He tried to induce me to go back to his mother's. But when I told him that I knew all about the famous gambling night he left that theme and began again the eternal plea for money.

Thoroughly disgusted, I cut the interview short and went to see my lawyer and friend. I told him what had happened since I had talked to him last and that I wanted a divorce at once. We went over the ground and decided that my best plan would be to try for a divorce by mutual agreement, free of accusations on either side. My husband and I each held one advantage; I had secured a legal separation from him; he had begun divorce proceedings against me. An attempt to have the decision pronounced in favour of either one of us would mean a contest, for which I had no inclination. I was confident that Herbert would agree to this arrangement and left the matter in M. Pérard's hands.

I spent my last night at the convent and the next morning, on a beautiful spring day, I took a little carriage to the villa. There was neither cook nor provisions but Clothilde promised to have all in readiness for dinner at eight o'clock.

My son and I went off for another good happy day together, lunching at the same little place on the Seine where we had been before. When we reached home

Clothilde had done wonders: a cook in the kitchen, provisions in the larder, flowers everywhere and a good hot bath. She had even braved the ogre in the Faubourg St. Germain and brought back two valises filled with my clothes.

My first letter from this new home was written to Fitz James, inviting him to luncheon the day after he should receive it. I spent the morning of that day arranging and re-arranging the house. Nothing suited me. I poked the fire a dozen times, went from one bowl of flowers to another, changed and adjusted, pushed the easy chairs around, studying them from this angle and that. I bubbled with happiness.

He came at twelve thirty and it was a glorious meeting. My life seemed to me to have been a series of battles in which I was always the loser. Now victory was at hand. Freedom and marriage and the happiness that should have been ours ten years ago. We sat near the blazing fire and talked of our plans, of all our affairs, of one another and of nothing else besides. Oh, how happy we were, just happy!

"Now," he said, "let us speak of dates. When?"

I told him that without opposition I should have my divorce in fifteen days; with opposition it might take six weeks; but the outcome was certain and it could be delayed no longer than that.

He smiled: "I believe I shall be the one to have my divorce first then."

"How can that be?" I asked in wonder.

"Vivien is finding letters that I have placed for her to find. They name dates and places and she is constantly on the watch for them. I have given her as much ground as she can possibly need for a divorce. Her rage is now

at the boiling point and I am pretty sure it will be a short run to liberty and you."

We parted happily. Indeed I do not think there was an hour during that period when I was not brimming with joy. The world spread radiant before me. I have always attributed to my state of intoxicated bliss a compliment which is one of the few I have never ceased to cherish.

I used sometimes to meet an old Italian street sweeper in an avenue through which I rode to and from my home, often with my little son. He always took his cap off and kept it off while I passed. One day he had a little child with him and, pointing to us, he dropped on his knees, crossed himself and said quite loud: "La Madonna! La Madonna e il Bambino." Deeply touched, I told Antoine that he must never forget that he had been likened to the Blessed Baby.

A few days after my talk with Fitz James, he announced to me jubilantly that his divorce had been granted. Mine had not been opposed and news of a successful outcome came a few days later. The settlement provided that my son should be with his grandmother and father one month for every two with me; that he was to stay with me whenever I was in Belgium and afterwards spend a corresponding length of time with them. He went to them the week after the decree was signed.

I travelled awhile, if going to London and Ireland can be called travelling, and came back in time for the publication of my marriage banns. I was in Paradise. The misery of the past years did not matter at all any more if they were the payment in full for this happiness.

When I returned to Paris Fitz James lived, or rather

slept, at the club and spent most of his time with me. He was always the welcome one. We had missed so many years of each other's company that the days did not seem long enough to compensate for lost time.

One afternoon, on returning to the villa, I found Clothilde in tears. She had received a telegram, saying that her brother had died that morning and that her mother was very ill. I hurried her off to her people in Brittany with instructions to stay as long as she was needed.

Before she left we sent for the little girl who acted as second maid. Clothilde had trained her and hoped that I should find her satisfactory. I had never noticed or really seen her until that moment.

She was a typical *midinette*, a real *gamin de Paris*. I do not think she could have been over sixteen; she wore her short hair in a mass of frizzy black curls, kept tidily within bounds by combs; she had vivacious, snappy green eyes and a thin pale face with a naughty mouth and quivering nostrils; altogether a very pretty type of the Parisian *gavroche* or *grisette*.

She had been raised God knows how or where. "La Gouttière," she called herself, "the gutter girl. I don't know who my father was or my mother and I don't care." Somehow she had found employment in Virot's hat store, carrying the hats to the homes of the customers. Coming to the villa on such an errand, she had told Clothilde some harrowing stories of her experiences with the gentlemen she encountered in the course of her duties; and how much she would like to be in a nice situation and learn to be a ladies' maid. Clothilde, good soul, promised to teach her and to place her later on when she should become competent.

I tested her ability. She was quick and quiet and well-

mannered and would do very nicely. I said to her: "Very well. Do your best until Clothilde returns and, if you are satisfactory, you shall have a good place with one of my friends; or stay here with Clothilde, as second, if you prefer."

So the days went on. The first banns of our marriage were to be published the following Saturday. Two weeks after that we should be married. We decided to travel in Great Britain during those summer months until the time came to go to Belgium; and start our life together in Paris only the following winter. I had to run up to Liège twice on some transfer and signature matters, and each time I made the trip as short as possible, staying away not more than one day even though I had to spend two nights on the journey.

It was on the first of these occasions that I gave Fitz James the key to my garden gate, so that he might go to the house whenever he wished and feel entirely at home there.

The third time I went to Brussels I had to stay away three days. Fitz James joined me and we returned together. We read in the *Gaulois* on our way to Paris the announcement of the third and last publication of our banns We decided to be married the following Wednesday at two or three o'clock and to leave that same evening for London.

Four days and the hope and longing of all these years was actually to become reality! We had supper together, *au café de la Paix*. He took me as far as the gate, let me in with his key and drove away.

I called the Gamin, which was the name—and it suited her—that I had given my little maid. She had not expected me and was asleep. Hurriedly throwing on a

wrap, she came down, looking more *gamin* than ever; but such a tired, drawn face and eyes as large as saucers.

"What is the matter?" I asked her. "Are you ill?"

"Non, Princesse. But I—I—I am so sad about Clothilde. Her mother died and she is all broken up. She was to have returned yesterday but she was ill and could not come. There is a letter from her waiting for Your Highness."

I read the letter and decided to wire Clothilde in the morning not to hurry back but to take all the time she needed. The Gamin was brushing my hair. In the mirror I noticed how uncanny was the expression of her face. She looked ill, very. Her manner was heavy and listless as if she had not slept for nights. She saw that I was watching her and tried to brace up.

I said: "Gamin, I will have a doctor to see you to-morrow. You are really ill."

"No, no, no!" she protested. "I am all right. Clothilde's letter upset me, that is all."

She prepared my bath and went to fetch me some ice water from the kitchen. I was out of the bath and ready for a rub-down, yet she had not returned. I thought I heard a sound near the telephone just outside the bathroom; slipping on my sandals, I went to the door.

Yes, some one was talking at the phone in a low, sobbing voice. I opened the door and saw the Gamin, her head on the table, talking low, low, low into the transmitter and crying her eyes out.

She saw me and dropped the receiver with a look of such fright as I could not understand.

"What is the matter, Gamin? Whom are you phoning to?"

"I was not phoning," she answered glibly. "I thought I heard the call bell ring while I was downstairs and ran up to take the message. But I could not hear anything."

"Nonsense," I said. "You are ill, unstrung, God knows why. Go to bed and be ready for your duties at eight o'clock or the doctor will attend to whatever ails you."

She was on time in the morning but she looked worse than ever. Much against her will, I sent for the doctor who came to me with his report after he had examined her. "All that is the matter with her is that she must be leading a day and night existence. She is worn out by drugs and fast living. It will not do to let her see that you know the truth. She will bolt if she discovers that I have told you and go completely to ruin. But if you will send her to this place"—giving me an address —"in the near future, I will keep her there and cure her. Again, I beg of you, do not let her suspect that I have posted you."

Instead of sending the telegram I had planned to Clothilde, I wired her to come back as soon as she could. I was sorry but I felt I could not get along without her help.

I met Fitz James in town for lunch after church. We went for a long drive. He was to dine that evening with friends at the club, his last bachelor dinner. I had promised my neighbours, the De Lannoys, to dine with them. I was very fond of the Comtesse though her husband, ponderous and dogmatic, I found a bore. It was arranged with Fitz James that he should come to take supper at the villa at about eleven thirty and that I should bring the De Lannoys back with me, after we had visited the *Foire de Neuilly* which was then in progress.

At six I left him at the club and went home where I found an answer from Clothilde to say she would be with me the next day. I was glad she would be there on my wedding day—Wednesday! And this was Sunday. Only Monday and Tuesday between.

The Gamin had my things ready but she looked like a living ghost. I told her that I was going away on Wednesday after my wedding and that I should be gone for several weeks or even months, perhaps; that she was to go to the address I would give her and stay there until my return.

"I will be dead on Wednesday," was the astounding rejoinder. She looked so wicked, so vicious, so hounded, so mad, that I said impatiently:

"Oh, you are absurd. Just suit yourself."

But before I sent her away I repented. "I shall not need you any more this evening. Take a good night's rest. I shall be late. If Count Fitz James comes, it is all right. You need not stay up or come down; he will wait if I am not back when he arrives. Now go to bed. Brace up. You are only a little girl yet, with all a long life before you that you can with your will and my help make agreeable and useful to yourself."

Again shrugging her shoulders, she repeated stubbornly: "I will be dead on Wednesday."

"Be dead, then," I retorted crossly and off I went, walking briskly to the De Lannoys' place.

After dinner we took a carriage to the fair and visited the shows up and down the long avenue. This bored me and I was eager to get to the roller coaster where I decided to spend the rest of the evening, garnering thrills as delicious as those of the wandering balloon of my childhood.

But when we found the roller coaster it was out of order. Thoroughly disgusted, I told Sacha that I had had enough of it. "I am going home. Come to supper with your husband, but bring no one else. Come as soon as you like. I will send the Urbaine back to you."

"I would come now," she replied, "if I could get hold of Otto. But we will do as you say."

Leaving the cab at the corner of the avenue, I sent it back to await my friends' pleasure. With my key I opened the garden gate, went in and up the steps. All was dark. I turned on the switch to see my way and opened the door of my bedroom. The electric lamp of the hall gave enough light to reveal, O God! the unforgettable horror that thrust itself before my sight.

Lying on my bed, crushed close in a passionate embrace, were two figures which, as my blurred vision slowly cleared, I recognised as those of the Gamin and the man who was to become my husband in two days. My stupefied gaze fastened on a pair of cherry red slippers—my slippers—that adorned the feet of the girl, the only spot of colour on the bed.

As the significance of what I saw began to make its way into my stunned consciousness, I felt that I could murder. Having nothing in my hand but my walking cane, I broke it in two across his back, crying: "Miserables, sortez!"

As I watched the door and gate from the summer room I saw them both vanish. A moment later the bell announcing the arrival of the De Lannoys rang.

It must have seemed to them that I had gone suddenly mad. For instead of admitting them, I closed the door behind me and went towards the carriage, saying: "We will have supper at the Ritz."

During the supper I made no explanation. A bottle of champagne, which was all I took, helped me to keep going. Long afterwards the Comtesse told me that the wildness of my manner and bearing that night were such as she knew could have resulted only from some overwhelming catastrophe. But she asked no questions and made no comment and when, years later, I told her the story she could not believe she had been a witness to the aftermath of such a drama.

I could not stay at the hotel as I had no clothes with me, so back we went to my place. It was long past twelve. I stayed all night in the summer room, smoked I do not know how many cigarettes, at dawn took a cold bath, drank several cups of strong coffee, and felt that the crisis had passed.

I told the cook that Clothilde would be back that day and to receive no one. I phoned to the locksmith to come at once and change the lock of the garden gate.

As I went out of the garden, I stopped and looked back at the place that had sheltered so many hopes and plans for happiness that had all collapsed in a second's revelation of a man's perfidy.

Three: L'AUTOMNE

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CHAPTER XVI

In Quest of Knowledge

THAT morning I went to my lawyer, saying simply: "I am not going to marry my cousin." He was dumbfounded but realised from my manner that it would be wiser to ask no questions. Grateful for his silence, I added: "Furthermore it will not be now or ever."

I asked him to make arrangements with the family for me to have my little boy by the first of September so that I might take him to Argenteau for several months; after that, he could stay with them for the same length of time. I was closing the Paris villa. "I am going," I said, laughing, "to do as others do; to drown myself in oceans of pleasure, to learn things of which I am evidently in ignorance and to enjoy life."

He saw I was distracted and in torment. Patting me on the shoulder, he said: "Don't give way. Your blood is too blue and true to corrode. Pleasure, in the sense that you imply, will neither contaminate nor cure you."

"I am happy that you think so highly of me but I do not deserve it, and I am determined to see and taste of everything life has to offer."

When I got back to the house Clothilde had arrived. She looked ill indeed, yellow, ugly. She had had an attack of jaundice but had come at my call, wondering at the condition of my room, asking where the Gamin was and why I looked and acted so strangely. I told her that

the Gamin was ill, that the doctor had taken her away, that my marriage was off, that we were going to England next day and that she was to have all the furnishings of my bedroom destroyed or given away at once. "All," I added fiercely, "not excepting the bed."

I saw them go away that day in a furniture van. I had the summer room turned into a sleeping place and so shut my room out of my sight, if not out of my memory.

Seeing that the dear old soul was too ill to come away with me, I told Clothilde to join me at the Berkeley Hotel in London in a week or so, that I would manage without her till then. She packed a trunk and off I went on a Wednesday that was to have been *the* Wednesday of my life. The very same train that was to have taken us both, married, took me alone.

Fitz James had phoned and written several times. The phone calls remained unanswered and the messengers took back the letters unopened. I put them into a blank sealed envelope so that no one need know they were letters returned. I wanted no sympathy. I hate pity. I have suffered and still can suffer alone, burying my dead within my heart. It was nobody's business.

I arrived in London very late in the evening and found my suite at the hotel awaiting me. My first thought was to telephone to my father's old Austrian friend, Count Gregory, who had always turned night into day. I told him that if he could get out of bed by then, he was to come and lunch with me at the Savoy at one thirty the next day.

"Oh, la, la," came his characteristic response over the phone. "Of course I shall be there."

He was in the reception room of the Savoy when I

got there. His first question was: "Where is Fitz James?"

I laughed. "How should I know?"

Open-mouthed, he could find only one thing to do. He screwed his monocle into his eye.

"Don't look so stupid," I said, giving him a little shake. "I am here alone—to have a good time."

But his idiotic expression remained unchanged. Adjusting his third eye more firmly and clicking his heels together, he protested: "But—forgive me—the papers said you were to be married."

"Let the papers say what they please. I tell you I am here, alone, free as air, not married nor likely to be, and determined to see everything there is to be seen. I count on you to act as my cicerone. You are harmless so far as I am concerned. That is why I selected you."

Not knowing quite how to take this compliment he was silent and I led the way to a table overlooking the Thames. A good luncheon, a cocktail, a Moselle cup—and little by little he grew merry, laying plans to show me all the sights of darkest London and give me a taste of all its ill flavours. "Do you know the Duchess V?" he asked.

I did not.

"Well, I must bring you ladies together. She has started on this kind of sightseeing and is the best sport in the world. I will bring her to you to-day sometime between four and six. I will also try to round up K. and we can start on our wanderings to-night."

"All right," I agreed. "By the way, I am here under my own name, you understand."

"Parfaitement."

I began thinking and putting my ducks in a row. I

wrote first to the Prince of Wales, saying how much I wished to see him and asking if he would give me a formal audience or do me the honour of coming informally to luncheon or tea at the Berkeley. I signed my married name as I wanted to tell him myself what had happened and not begin at the end.

At five o'clock my Austrian friend came to tea with Colonel H. and the Duchess V. The Duchess was the only stranger to me but in less than five minutes she had won me to her completely. She was the most friendly and amusing creature imaginable, plump, of medium height, a pink-and-white flaxen-haired person, all paint and dye, black eyelashes and brows, a striking picture rendered more striking by her exaggerated make-up; but pretty withal, and bewitching, so full of spirit and vitality was she. We were acquaintances of a hundred years' standing in an hour and what was not planned in that time it was useless to try to invent. They knew all about the night, and for that matter the day, life of darkest London. I was told what to wear for the expedition and we agreed to dine with the Duchess at eight that evening.

I must say that had my education for good been as cleverly conducted as was this one for evil, I should have been graduated with honours. They introduced me to resorts which, if neither elegant nor decorous, were certainly piquant and exciting. Nor did I find these first places repulsive. That came later; but by that time I had grown inured to the sight of evil and even the worst of them failed to shock me.

My first visit to the London Montmartre did not amuse me. It may be that I was too numb and wretched to be capable of sensation. I saw a crowd of roughnecks gathered in Whitechapel to see a rat-killing. The sport

lay in betting on which dog could kill the greatest number of rats in a narrow, deep enclosure within a given time. The sight sickened me and I begged to be excused. Other places, crowded with their rowdy, drunken habitués, seemed to me tragic in their forced gaiety. They interested me only because they were so different from anything I had ever seen before.

After a few days I was introduced to my first mild pipe at the opium den of Li Sing Koo. I did not like it, yet to satisfy my always burning curiosity I tried again and again until at last the charm enveloped me.

It was a revelation; the horrible surroundings were forgotten; all the degraded people about me passed into shadow, leaving in my desolate soul a magic peace. I floated among such enchantments—delicious, sensuous—as, waking, my mind would have avoided but which, under the influence of the drug, seemed right and natural. Then, alas, came the cruel awakening, the shock of returning consciousness and the knowledge that this brutal reality was the only truth and that the rest was nothing —a veritable pipe-dream.

A characteristic of London night life was its essential vulgarity, which was much more apparent than its gaiety. All the women, even to the desperate old hags, dressed God knows how, went about begging for drinks. The men, intent on some money-getting scheme, earnestly discussed their next coup or the division of the spoils of the last. It was not unusual to hear the table next to yours come crashing to the ground, while its occupants hurled chairs at one another. Sometimes firearms and knives came into play. The women joined in the fray and a battle royal ensued in which any weapon that came to hand was used and the vilest kind of language bandied about.

When this happened we hurried away, anxious to escape recognition. Once we saw Jack the Ripper, a bundled-up figure, with a scarf drawn level with his eyes and a cap pulled down covering them. Some would have it that this was the Prince of Wales, trying to capture a new and piquant sensation. But this I never believed.

We were also taken to a place where we ourselves must not be seen—and watched what went on through holes in the walls, in cupboards, in doors, in floors. These sights were the intense delight of the Duchess who many a time when I was disgusted to nausea would hug me in her ecstasy, murmuring: "Oh, what a sight! How I should like to be in her place!" It was in this fashion that we saw the episode of the three live ducks, the cupboard drawers and the Chinese sailors! For those who have seen this thing no description is needed; those who have not may better remain in ignorance.

Later we would join our party who may have been enjoying the same scene from some other peephole. One of them took part in such an adventure on one occasion, ignorant that he was being watched.

Generally we went to some fish place to finish the evening. There was always champagne to be had, even in the remotest inns, so that it was possible to wash down my choking distaste of what I had seen. But I always went back. Just as the Duchess was entranced by the sordid physical displays, so I was captivated by the dreams of the opium dens—enslaved by my imagination. The Bible says: "You sin by action, also by omission if you think evil." Then, O Lord! a veil, I beg, to cover up my sins.

But nothing that I saw in England could compare with

the beastliness of similar places in Italy where I went not long after in my mad hunt for new sensations. One of the most celebrated cynics of Paris, very wealthy, but ugly as he was corrupt, offered to show me Italy as it is seldom seen. He had an intimate friend, then ambassador to Rome, who could provide the open sesame to all those closely guarded chambers of horrors.

It was a jackals' expedition and we found what we were looking for in abundance. Naples was the worst, contaminated possibly by the lustful neighbourhood of Pompeii. When I think of the private hall of the medical museum there, allowed to doctors only, I feel ready to faint at the memory of the hideous things I saw.

But it probably did me good—the very extremity of the depravity to which I was introduced revolted me and restrained me from going as far as I might perhaps have gone if my tutelage had been more subtle. I smiled as I thought of my honeymoon trip in Italy when, no shadow of evil in my mind, I had been so distressed by the advances of the flirtatious officer in the railway carriage. I had travelled a long way since then.

But I am racing far ahead of my story. One of the prince's equerries called the morning after my first night out in England, to tell me that the prince would come to tea at five next evening. He arrived promptly with his faithful French bull. Sitting down near the fire with his tea and lemon, his special crackers and his cigarettes, he asked kindly about my affairs. He had been distressed at the rumours of my unhappy marriage and of my intimacy with that "notorious scamp, Fitz James."

I told him my story and ended with: "Now all is

finished; I am divorced, there will be no marriage to Fitz James and I am going to become a seeker of all knowledge, good and bad. What is there to tempt me with?"

I stood by the fireplace and the Prince, fondling his short beard, smiled up at me after this outburst. "What an easy prey!" he probably thought, but he only said: "If it is a fact that you are rid of that scamp, Fitz James, I won't so much deplore your divorce. But keep it under cover here. The Queen detests divorces and does not receive divorcées at court, and I want you there. So use your married name *en vedette*. Your husband may be ill or away; nobody need be the wiser; but his shadow must remain. As to your seeing London's evil life, don't linger at it. I will myself chaperon you one of these nights if you promise to do as I have suggested." I made him a military salute in response.

"Next Monday, with Lady W., Madame de M. (a Chilean lady, his friend of the hour), K. and a few others, we will go for a while to Ned's dance hall. Things are pretty rough there as a rule. Wear some dark plain wrap that covers you completely. And remember, this must remain strictly *entre nous*." He left shortly thereafter. It was getting late and his days were full, full, full. I often wondered how he managed everything, court ceremonial and private pleasure, official business and unofficial distractions.

The next evening K., who was with us at a prize fight in a den near the river, said to me: "By the way I am sorry I shall not be able to join you on Monday. I shall be on duty."

"Well," I answered, "we will call it off Monday and have a rest." But we both laughed when we met at the

Garrick Theatre that Monday night. He realised that I was the newest recruit to the Prince's brilliant entourage.

After the play we proceeded in several hansoms; the Prince and Madame de M. in one; Lady W., an intermittent flame, H. and I in another; two more followed. We reached the underground entrance of that notorious dance hall, a cavern-like low-ceiled place, badly lit with a few ill-smelling oil lamps and furnished with wooden tables and chairs, with a stage at one end on which the usual singing and boxing acts followed one another.

The climax of the evening's entertainment was announced—a genuine Oriental *danse du ventre.* We were all expectancy and this was indeed such a dance as I had never seen before in the most Oriental of Orients. It was distressingly crude. The dancer's movements, graceful and lovely at first and in perfect harmony with the weird noise of the accompaniment, grew acrobatic and grotesque as the volume of sound increased. Her wrigglings and contortions became livelier and little by little, as she danced, she freed herself of her veils and draperies till she was revealed at last clothed in a multicoloured belt from which strings of sparkling beads fell to her feet. She shook and threw her body about as though she were possessed. The music grew wilder, the tumult louder, the clapping and stamping and shrieking of drunken voices swelled to a frenzy, and the dancer, bending backward, touched her heels with her hands while, amid shouts and yells and the braying of instruments, the belt snapped and an absolutely nude, abundantly obese Bacchante continued her distorted antics before the roaring crowd.

The Prince was delighted. "Great! Great! Im-

mense! Keep it up! Shake! Shake! Keep it up!" And keep it up she did until she collapsed in a heap on the stage floor. At this point, whether by accident or design, a man knocked over a huge pitcher of beer standing on one of the tables. Exactly what happened I do not know, for before I could catch my breath a furious fight was raging in the middle of the floor. Near the stage a lamp caught fire and was quickly extinguished. In their fury the mob approached us. We sought shelter further back but the Prince, urging the fighters on, was enjoying himself too much to move. Finally he was caught off his chair and tumbled into the melée. His two equerries did all they could to rescue him, but they were only two more caught in the whirling eddy. The next thing we knew the bobbies were clearing the place out and pulling, pushing and beating the crowd into behaviour. Horrified, we wondered what would happen next, where the Prince was, what we could do. At last the next number was announced from the stage and relative calm was restored. The Prince and the two equerries returned for us, apparently none the worse for the experience, and we left the place. This time the Prince took me into his hansom with him. It was three o'clock. Strange, was it not? To see the heir to the British throne being hustled out of this dive with its drunken mob!

When we reached his club, he asked me: "Does my hat, placed this way, shade my face? Do you think the driver can possibly know me?" Without waiting for my answer he turned to the driver. "Just turn your horse around. I will be back in a minute."

Touching his cap, the cabman answered: "Yes, Your Highness."

So he did know after all and there was no point in

concealment. Leaving me at the door of the Berkeley, "St. James," said the Prince resignedly.

When the Cowes season came I went there, really needing to get away from London. That life was beginning to tell on my nerves and general condition. I could not go to any social affairs because of my mourning, so we disbanded for a while and I went to the delightful shore of the Isle of Wight, dividing the time between bathing, riding and visiting, and taking long yachting trips in the Solent.

Later the Prince and Princess of Wales came on their yacht to spend two weeks. I went to tea with them and the tea lengthened into an informal bridge party and dinner. After that we played bridge nearly every evening. Since we seldom began till after midnight, the sessions continued well into the early morning and we left the clubhouse to go swimming, sometimes for twenty minutes, sometimes for two hours; then breakfast at the club; then bed or tennis or driving or riding or yachting. But we were always busy at nothing.

I recall an amusing incident that occurred one night. A good friend of mine, the Countess Marie de K., came to Cowes to spend a few days with her great lover, Prince André. The Countess and I had adjoining suites at the Marine Hotel, our bedrooms separated by the bathroom. How it happened I cannot say but her maid had prepared her things in the room that was to be mine and mine had been prepared in hers. It did not matter to me. We returned late from the Yacht Club a few steps away and hurried to our rooms and beds. Presently I heard a gentle, cautious noise as of some one walking carefully on the balcony outside my room. My window, slightly open, was pushed farther up and with one leap

over the sill some one was in. I flashed the light on and, to my dismay and his, faced Prince André. He murmured some inarticulate words of excuse and leaped again through the window. Immediately there was a terrific crash, the sound of breaking glass and then the dull, heavy thud of a body fallen from a height. Like a fool Marie rushed to the window of her room, shrieking out in despair: "André, André, are you hurt?"

I rushed through the bathroom to her side. "Are you mad? Do you want people to know everything? Let it pass as an attempted burglary. The Prince is quite old enough to take care of himself and the devil looks after his own." But he did not do so well in this case. Poor André had fallen through the glass roof of the sun parlor that was the prolongation of my balcony, with a bad shake-up and a broken arm as the result of his escapade. He managed to get away, however, before any one came to investigate and it was decided that the damage had been done by a burglar or a dog. A dog with two feet! They both left that evening.

The next day I discovered to my horror that Fitz James was on the island. He wrote that he had come to plead with me and begged me to receive him. I did not answer his letters or acknowledge his presence by word or sign; yet he waylaid me everywhere. After several days his notes began to grow more aggressive and menacing and finally I told the Prince how he worried me and how distasteful his attentions were. From that day I never saw him on the island again and only once in my life after that—many years later and at a safe distance.

I knew that my love was dead—completely and finally dead, transmuted into disgust, repulsion and rage at having been cheated. But I was determined to drown every

memory, to fill my days, my life, with anything—to leave no empty moment in which the dead might come to clamour at my heart.

At the Prince's suggestion I decided to go to Marienbad for the cure, which he was taking himself. I hated it. Rising at five to drink the waters, meeting the same people day after day, walking up the mountains what seemed to me an interminable distance to a well-earned breakfast, which consisted of overdone lean ham, toast, light tea and lemon, and very little of that. One stayed, talked awhile, walked down again, took a mud bath and a glass of atrocious water, ate a very light luncheon, rested, then came the third dose of water, more walking and dressing for the evening. The Prince's coterie dined with him and his staff, or we entertained him at our own villas or hotels in turn, then the theatre, concert, bridge and bed by eleven at the latest. When it came to an end, I was starved to death. No wonder one gets thin. But at what a price! And this had a double meaning for the prices were literally exorbitant and, pay what you would, you got nothing but what the cure called for.

The mud baths had this peculiarity, that the hot black muck did not stick when one rose from the bathtub, as ordinary mud would, but slipped off. It is a very peculiar soil. If the first disagreeable impression of sinking down into that black dirt could be eliminated I should like to have taken the mud bath with me, the only thing in Marienbad I cared for.

I took the train to Vienna and forgot all about my cure, confiding my troubles—chief of which was my state of famine—to Pasqualine and, with my cousins, the Prince and Princess Paar, and the Hohenlohes, we went into all the best eating places we could find.

CHAPTER XVII

Wrangles

I REACHED Argenteau on an afternoon in October. My mother was still there, Louis told me, but since it was long past my specified time of arrival I remained. I had my supper at eight, my mother having had hers half an hour earlier. Strange family!

Next day I phoned to Paris to say that I was coming to fetch my son and take him back to Belgium, and asking that he be made ready to go with me on the following Monday. Before I left my mother sent me a message by the worthy Poswick. She would remain at Argenteau during October and a part of November. Could I not make it convenient to stay away until she left? I answered that I could not change my plans but that they need not interfere with hers; it was by her will, not mine, that we could not live there together. There was no answer.

I had my lunch at one o'clock in the gallery adjoining the greenhouse that dominated the lovely valley and the course of the river from Belgium to Holland. I stayed there a long time, thinking, wondering, reviewing all that had gone to the making of my years. My childhood had been misery, my married life a grotesque failure, my creed a ruin, my love an ugly wound, my own family shifting sand. My life stretched, blank and empty, ahead of me. These follies in which I had been indulging I knew for what they were—a senseless craving for

excitement to keep me from thought. How long would they continue to satisfy me?

The only one thing that was perhaps worth living for was my little boy. And here again was a problem. This division of his young life, half the influence over him mine, half his father's and grandmother's—how could it result in anything but harm to him? However, I was going to bring him back where he had been born, to be entirely mine for four months. Those months, at any rate, would be devoted to his little self and then we should see. Whatever plans were to be made might wait till later.

Towards evening my lawyer came and told me that my mother had refused the experts permission to enter the château to start their work and that a lawsuit would be necessary to ensure the appraisal. I sent a line to my mother by Louis asking if I might see her on a serious matter. Her answer was that she had no matter whatever that made it necessary for her to see me and that if I had anything to communicate to her I might do so through M. Poswick. This made me very angry and I instructed the *notaire* to go ahead with whatever legal steps were advisable.

The interpretation placed upon my father's will by my mother and her counsel, which made it appear that she owned Argenteau and its contents during her lifetime, involved the danger of a possible disposal of the treasures contained in the old place among her unscrupulous adherents. She might even will her share in Argenteau to them after her death to be enjoyed during *their* lifetime. Plainly the situation must be controlled and matters so arranged as to permit my mother to use what she liked for herself, but to prevent the possibility of the

property's being either cajoled or stolen from her.

I carefully explained all this to the *Procureur du Roy*. I instructed my lawyers to be as courteous as possible and to make it clear that it was not my mother against whom my action was directed but her advisers and friends. I was distressed at having to bring this suit; whatever the relations between my mother and me, I could not rid myself of the habit of respect and show of dutifulness which were ingrained in me.

I signed the necessary papers before leaving that night for Paris where I arrived early the next morning. Clothilde had sent the little *fiacre* to meet me at the station; and to the villa I went—for the first time since the nightmare of the cherry red slippers. It was a damp rainy day and my heart was heavy with painful memories but a bright fire and a welcome bath, a pretty teagown and a pleasant little breakfast and Clothilde's good homely face, all wrinkled with smiles, helped me through the ordeal. After breakfast I lit a cigarette and in smoke the nightmare vanished. I attended to many things, keeping the telephone busy nearly all the morning. The one person I wanted to see, the Comtesse De Lannoy, I was unable to reach.

In the afternoon I did some shopping and made one or two calls. At one place I met my cousin Georgina who asked me in her doleful tones if I knew that our dear cousin, handsome Fitz James, was going about now with a young boy trailing after him; that it was said these two were setting off, if they had not already gone, to Africa to seek the Elephants' Cemetery in the Sahara or its neighbourhood, and that the most peculiar stories were being spread about them. I told her that I did not at

all care where he went or what he found. In a languid, pointedly disagreeable manner she said:

"So you have come to your senses? I am really glad to hear it."

I tried a second and a third and wherever I went it was the same story. They were all on fire with curiosity and tried all kinds of dodges, skilful and clumsy, to discover what had happened. The rupture had apparently come and yet they could not be sure. One never could tell. We might be playing a deep game for their benefit. I left them as wise as I found them.

To my delight I met Sacha quite by accident. "Now," I said, "that I have got you I won't let you go. We will take supper and have a quiet little *baignoire* for a very much talked of wicked play at the *Ambigu*."

She was shocked. "But you are in deep mourning—or ought to be," looking at my plain black suit, unadorned by crêpe.

I told her that I did not need mourning for people to see, that I carried my mourning in my heart, that seeing this drama or not, wearing crêpe or motley, would in no way affect my father or my feelings toward him, and as for what people said or thought about it, I cared not a snap.

So we went, just we two. During the entr-actes several friends came to see us and there was the same thing to be gone through as in the afternoon. Had I heard about Fitz James? What were these strange rumours that were being circulated about him? Two things were made clear to me beyond any doubt. The boy who travelled with him was the Gamin and they were going to Africa. The search for the Elephants' Cemetery sounded

probable. We had often discussed it and speculated upon the possibility of finding it.

Before I left Sacha I invited her and her son to Belgium. "Your husband, too, if need be," I added.

She laughed outright. "I don't think he will bother us often. If he knows he can come he will stay away."

That suited me perfectly. "Come when you like and stay as long as you like," I urged.

On Monday morning I saw my lawyer, arranged for a three or four months' absence and waited till Emilie and my son came.

In those four months, I was distressed to find, the little fellow had become completely alienated from me. He refused to come near me and when I tried to take him, he cried—a thing he had never done—and flew into a terrific rage, kicking and screaming so violently that I was afraid he would hurt himself.

I asked Emilie what he wanted and she assured me that this was the method by which he managed to get anything he liked from his grandmother; also that Madame la Duchesse had told him that if he were *méchant* his mother would send him back and he could go and play with his cousin and see the races with his father.

Seeing how the wind blew, I spoke loudly to Emilie so that my voice could be heard above his howls: "Well, take Madame De Lannoy's son instead of Antoine to ride the pony and go with him in the chuf-chuf and play with the bow-wows and chickens and goats, and let him run about everywhere since Antoine doesn't seem to want to do anything but howl."

Still sobbing and breathless, but with the beginning of a smile breaking through the tears, he gasped: "Don't take nobody. I play with bow-wow and elephant too."

THE AUTHOR AND HER SON, ANTOINE.

THE CHATEAU D'ARGENTEAU.

ARGENTEAU FROM THE BRIDGE OVER THE MEUSE.

I took him into my arms. "No, darling, no elephant, but we can go and see one and all the other big old things at the zoo." And off we went to the zoological gardens. Everything was bright and happy and, though I realised my folly, I could not resist the temptation of saying to him: "Now, Bobbie, I think it will be time for you to go back to Grandma."

He caught me tight by the skirts and, his little face uplifted, with a look of real fright he protested: "No, no, no; don't want to go back; never no more."

It sounded delicious but in my heart of hearts it distressed more than it pleased me. So easily moulded by any influence, between us all we might be in a fair way to ruin him.

We had our supper at the *Gare du Nord* opposite the station, and joined Clothilde and Emilie at the train. Antoine was put to bed in the sleeper, much to his delight, and woke up at the country station. He was so wild with glee that he even forgot he was hungry. He wanted to play with the dogs and wade in the stream but I persuaded him that he must eat first and keep something to do later on. I was as happy as he.

When we reached the house, old Louis asked if he might take him in his arms and cried with emotion in so doing: "Years ago I held you in my arms in the same way. If Madame la Princesse had only been a boy, how different it would have been in the family."

"Yes," I replied. "It would have been a very different story altogether. But, Louis, I was a girl and here is a boy, one generation too late."

I sent Antoine, in old Louis's care, with a rose to see his grandmother but she was busy dressing and refused to be bothered with children. So that was that.

The Comtesse De Lannoy came the following week with her son. Antoine enjoyed having a boy to play with and Sacha and I had much in common. The days passed, charmed and peaceful, and I was content. But I soon discovered that between contentment and complete happiness there was a wide gap. I found it difficult to adjust myself to the flatness and tameness of this quiet existence. The thought of my son gave me warmth and comfort but there were large areas of my life that my son could not fill.

The monotony of those days was broken by an occasional missive from my mother, reproaching me for one or another of my misdeeds of which she was made aware through a notification from court or a visit from a lawyer to question her about some inexplicable development in connection with my father's estate.

Finally came the verdict. A number of experts were chosen who were to examine and appraise each article comprising the property. My mother was wrought by this into a frenzy of rage and her letters conveyed to me its full force. After having put in her appeal from this judgment, she left for Russia with the whole party of her artist friends who had been staying with her.

I grew more and more troubled about my son; disturbed by the accuracy with which he could gauge the advantages of his position as between his grandmother and me and the shrewdness with which he tried to play us one against the other. He soon discovered that the plan which worked so successfully with his grandmother had no effect on me and there was little conflict between us. But I knew that the tendency was there.

I stayed on at Argenteau till it was time to take him back to Paris. I planned to stay there for a month or so

and then travel until the time came to have him with me again.

But during that month in Paris, without breathing a word to any one, I tried to obtain absolute custody over my son. I had learned from Emilie that they had had trouble with him on his return to the Hôtel. Naturally they assumed, as I had under similar circumstances, that I had encouraged him to be disagreeable with them. If anything was denied him, he would storm: "Maman allowed me to do as I liked," and threaten: "I will go back to Maman unless you permit it." He even persuaded them that I had given him a gun to use, which so terrified his grandmother that she offered him a pony-cart on condition that he would not exact the gun.

As for Emilie, it was fashionable in those days for nurses to wear large coloured pins in the ribbons of their caps. She would transfer her loyalty for a pin. It was an equal contest between the Duchess and myself. Her heart would warm to whichever of us succeeded in capturing for her the larger and handsomer pin.

Strong in the feeling that, till he could go to school, it would be best for the boy to be in absolute charge of one or the other, free of conflicting influences, the subject was amicably broached to my husband's family. They would not hear of it and I made my demand of the court in referee, which meant that the judge would settle the question in a private hearing. I explained how disastrous was the divided authority over him at his tender age and that this tearing and pulling at his mind would make a poor basis for his future development. I put my case as well as I knew how and waited for the decision.

It was in favour of the other side. The judge stated that, on the one hand, there was a grandmother, an

elderly lady, and the father, living together (yes, living together, but quarrelling everlastingly), with lofty religious principles which had indeed prevented the father from remarrying; on the other hand, I was at daggers drawn with my own mother and had only recently contemplated marriage with a notorious member of society. My tendencies were nomadic; all told, it was best that for the time being the child should remain in the charge of his paternal grandmother.

Of course I fought this for though appearances were all against me I knew that I could rear my son more wisely than his grandmother and more devotedly than his father. Realising that the legal wrangle would last for months, I gave up the idea of travel and stayed in Paris to await the final result.

When it came it confirmed the earlier verdict. By that time I was nervous and restless beyond endurance. If the boy had been given to me I should have devoted myself to him, though I was aware that the placidity of the existence I should be obliged to lead would often bore and weary me. But the stakes were high enough to justify the sacrifice.

As it was, I do not hesitate to admit that there was an element of relief in the complicated emotion with which I received the court's decision. I had done all in my power and lost. Very well. My freedom at least remained to me and I departed for a tour of the Orient.

CHAPTER XVIII

Drugs

IT was at Bangkok that fate came again to tangle the threads of my life. There had been a great fête given by the king of Siam, a wild, gorgeous affair, a very riot of colour and light and weird frenzied dancing. All the foreign colony of note had been invited, and there I met again Prince Henri d'Orléans. We were both delighted, each seeing a little of Paris in the other.

Very soon he asked me: "Where is Fitz James? It seems to me," regarding me closely, "that at El Fayoum you were both sunk deep in romance. I must admit to you that I envied his good luck and should have liked to be in his place. But you seemed too far gone in dreams to take any notice at all of me and my despair."

I did not tell him that if I had noticed it I had been too happy to care. I answered him soberly: "Monseigneur, we sleep, to dream of things to be. Alas, too often we awake to the reality of what actually is." And returning his gaze, I added: "I awoke from idle dreams to the ugliest of facts."

"The pity of it! You were the handsomest pair I ever saw on this good earth."

He said no more, seeing how deep the wound still lived in my heart. Later in the evening we were joined by young Maxime Groult, a Parisian acquaintance whom I had occasionally seen about town though he moved in a different social circle from mine. He was the "naughty boy," the eldest son of an immensely wealthy merchant

who, having amassed a fortune, could afford to indulge his expensive tastes, among which was a hobby for the collection of beautiful and curious objects. The son, however, who was then, I suppose, about thirty, with his father's penchant for spending money, had not the same faculty for acquiring it. His generous allowance was usually gone before he received it and, like so many rich men's sons, he replenished his purse by running into debt, knowing that, however much papa might storm, he would pay when it came to a lawsuit. But he had tried it once too often, there had been a scene, and he had been packed off for a year's trip round the world. Away from Paris, he was to learn how to behave!

He was witty and amusing, with a genuine appreciation of all forms of artistic beauty and an easy, worldly manner that made his society most agreeable.

A few days later the Prince left for Japan on that ill-starred trip from which he did not return. It was a mysterious death, never satisfactorily explained, that overtook him between Japan and Siam on his journey home. I have always wondered whether it was a premonition or a hint at some sinister purpose which caused him to end a letter written to me shortly before his death: "I would say 'Au revoir' but I think it is safer to say 'A Dieu.' "

After his departure I made several excursions with Maxime about Bangkok and its environs. He knew what was worth seeing and how it might best be seen. The name the Mongolian natives give their forest-clad country of narrow valleys and mountain ridges is Muang Thai, Kingdom of the Free, typical and pretty, but altogether inappropriate. The emperor is regarded as a deity and owns everything, even to the extent of one-third

of every male adult's time and his life absolutely in time of war.

In the course of these excursions I noticed that Maxime had strange erratic habits. He would grow morbid, vanish for a few seconds, and come back alert, lively and amusing as ever. In his morbid moods he seldom spoke. If he did it was in wildest abuse of his father whom he called "the gorilla." He felt the bitterest hostility toward him, to which he gave violent and unbridled expression. His mother he worshipped but resented the fact that she had allowed him, for the sake of peace, to be sent away out of her sight and reach.

I was going into the interior the following day; he was leaving by the next boat for the Philippines. Our last day in Bangkok was damp, heavy, powerfully scented, with all the miasmas and exotic smells of the Orient. On the veranda of the hotel we sat talking for long hours. On one pretext or another he would occasionally leave me for a second or two, returning to sit down to his whiskey and soda in a much brighter mood than when he left. I had finished my cigarettes and sent a boy for more. He hesitated a moment, then offered me his cigarette case.

"Will you try one? They are special."

His expression as he said this was so peculiar that I suspected I ought to refuse or at least ask a question or two. But I did not. I puffed at the cigarette and said:

"But they are simply exquisite."

He grinned rather disagreeably: "Don't be too hasty in your verdict. You may not like them after all."

By this time a little opaque cloud of blue smoke was visible within the white smoke of the cigarette, but not mingling with it. This, together with the unmistakable

sensation that was beginning to creep over me, made clear to me the heart of the mystery.

"Ah, but I do like hashish cigarettes only too well," I answered, "and smoked many a one when I was in Egypt."

Egypt! The desert! The endless topic! Here was a subject that fascinated us both. Those countries that grip and hold you bodily. And I use the word advisedly. It is rarely that a European escapes from the spell of the Orient without injury to his physical condition and it has sounded the death knell of many. As for the mind and spirit, once they have tasted of the East, the craving to return is irresistible. It may lie dormant for a time, but sooner or later it will wake, more powerful than ever, till it masters its victim or—in rare and exceptional cases—is conquered by him.

A second cigarette followed the first and it was not the last. We had supper brought out to us on the veranda, from which we could see the town and the evening lights as they began to appear. Deep in the theme that we both knew so well, we talked late into the night.

When he left he said: "Au revoir—à quand?"

"In Paris, next year."

"It seems very far away to me. It's a pity you are not going to the Philippines instead of the interior. Or might I go with you?"

I answered amiably but emphatically: "You are going to the Philippines, I to Hanoi. So au revoir, bonne chance, vive Paris!"

The next morning I took a local boat to Saigon and found Maxime at the dock to wish me *bon voyage*. My stateroom was a bower of orchids, masses of those peculiar

flowers, heavily scented, that live and eat, a connecting link between animal and vegetable life. I found too a wonderful Malacca wood box of rarest workmanship, containing boxes and boxes and boxes of cigarettes, with just three words on his card: "You like them."

At Saigon I decided on a boat trip along the Mekong. I was not feeling very well. The transition from the dry to the rainy season made of the atmosphere a veritable pestilence. Natives suffered from it, Europeans died of it. I had been warned against fever and dysentery and provided myself with preventives for both, before starting on the ten or twelve day river trip accompanied only by natives.

During one of the excursions on which I was carried in a sort of seat or hammock supported on the shoulders of two natives—and it was remarkable what headway they made at a walking pace—I found I was growing rapidly worse. Fever was getting the better of me and my efforts to check it. But I went on to visit the great Wat or Temple of Angkor whose marvellous proportions rise, a splendid sight, from the depths of primeval forests.

By the time we reached Hanoi I was so ill I could neither walk nor stand. Arriving at the hotel, I fell fainting out of my jinricksha. The doctor came and said that both fever and dysentery had developed. After that a blank.

When I next became conscious of my surroundings, I was lying, weak and dazed, on a balcony overlooking a big body of water and a native was fanning me. Shortly thereafter a doctor appeared.

"Well!" he greeted me. "So we have pulled you through after all. Without, my dear lady, seeking any

merit for having done my duty I must tell you that you have been sick unto death, and that those natives and doctors at Hanoi would have finished the job if I had not appeared at the critical moment."

"But where am I, doctor?" I asked. "You said the doctors at Hanoi. That is where I was going. In fact, that is where I had arrived when I was taken ill."

"Oh, you were at Hanoi all right and would be yet, dead most certainly, if I had not happened to be there too on my vacation from Calcutta. If you will think for a moment you will remember that you met me at Cowes and Marienbad with the Prince of Wales."

I remembered him at once and his appointment to the brigade in Calcutta. "But why am I here and where is here?"

"You are here because I could not stay in Hanoi any longer and I had either to leave you to the tender mercies of that crowd or take you away. Luckily, when they had about given you up, they called me in consultation. I knew you at once and took charge. I felt that I had a special right to act since I knew you although, under the circumstances, I should have done so anyway. All your things had been tampered with and many, I believe, stolen. I went to see the French consul and explained the situation to him and that your only chance for life was to be moved from the infection at Hanoi. He granted me the necessary authorisation and we are now in Hong-kong. My wife has just arrived from Calcutta. She may be of some help to you.

"Now I must tell you," he went on gravely, "that you have been kept alive by opium and morphine. What has been the death of so many has meant life to you. But this is the dangerous time. Little by little we must part

with what has been our help. I count on you to follow my directions exactly."

"How long have I been ill?" I asked after having assimilated all this information.

"Almost two months," was his amazing reply.

We stayed in Hongkong about three weeks longer. I was then just beginning to crawl about. I straightened out my account with the doctor and the only question that remained between us was his rationing of my morphine.

I saw that there was going to be trouble here. I had learned to depend heavily on the drug and was convinced that the doctor would not give me as much as I needed. I decided to seek information as to where I could procure some secretly. Sending for a coolie, I gave him my order. He grinned his abominable, knowing grin. "Me get plenty more opium, cookey (cocaine); good, forget pain," but he made no move to go.

"He is stupid," I thought. "If he should make a mess of it!"

He continued to grin at me hideously. "Wine, dream, live," he suggested. I could endure no more of him.

"I don't want any," I cried. "Get off, you yellow devil."

That evening, as fate would have it, I was helped downstairs for the first time and in the dining room several people came to talk to the doctor's wife. In the course of the conversation I learned that Hongkong was one of the largest depositories of drugs for shipping all over the world, and several names were mentioned of which I made a mental note. I was asked if I had tried either morphine or cocaine.

The doctor answered for me. "She has lived on them for three months to cure her and now we are trying to

get them out of her system and memory." Holding up a small box he said: "I am taking only this for her to be used en route. When it is empty, *bonsoir*, no more."

"You see, I could not use too much even if I wanted to," I smiled.

We walked a little in the garden but I was still so weak and ill that I needed support on either side and was as tired after the first few steps as though I had walked miles. We were leaving the next night on a steamer bound from Java to Colombo and Liverpool. The doctor and his wife would go with me as far as Ceylon on their way to Calcutta.

After the doctor had paid me his morning call and I knew he had gone to lunch aboard an English man-of-war, I ordered a coolie to take me in a jinricksha to a drug dealer whose name I had heard the previous evening.

"No, lady, no. Me not allowed—much beating—punished."

I started by giving him a shilling—two, three, four. He would not budge. When I got to ten and was moving away, he said: "Allee wight, lady, jump in."

Jump in? Lord, I rather fell in. He took me into a miserable, dirty district where I found what I was looking for. The dealer was willing to sell me any quantity of the stuff. I took an ample supply of both the morphine and cocaine and arranged with him for the shipping of more as I should need it through certain devious and secret channels which he carefully explained to me.

I had barely reached the hotel and was pausing at the foot of the steps before attempting to climb them when the doctor came strolling along.

"Gracious! Out at this hour and in this heat!" he exclaimed. "Will you never do anything to avoid a *rechute?* I shall be glad to have you safely aboard ship and at sea and out of danger."

I felt a sudden unwillingness to leave these friendly people who had been so good to me.

"Doctor, I want to go with you both," I pleaded. "I love Calcutta. I was there only once and for a very short time."

"My dear lady, much as we should both like to have you, you must get away from these climates. You are far from cured and might have a relapse at any time. And a relapse, in your condition, means a swift end."

In the evening we went aboard and sailed in the morning.

The relapse the doctor feared was a constant menace and, much against his will, he had to keep me on the drugs.

In due time we reached Singapore. I was too ill that day to take any interest in the going and coming of passengers. We passed the Straits of Malacca during an hour of relief that followed a strong dose of morphine and, as I amused myself with the purchase of some fine bamboo canes from the natives who surrounded the boat, I was suddenly aware of Maxime at my side, buying bamboo canes too and silk *sarongs*. That was a surprise and a pleasant one.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To where the boat turns back. Liverpool, I suppose."

"Same here," he said. "Only the pater will probably not have me back and I shall stay aboard and return to

Japan. I have been dying with dysentery and the doctors and authorities sent me away. I suppose they do not want me dying on their hands; they prefer an Indian Ocean burial."

"Funny," I replied. "If it had not been for Doctor Sir S.'s care, I should have died at Hanoi."

That evening we had a *partie carrée* of bridge, the doctor, his wife, Maxime and I. Before leaving my stateroom the doctor gave me my morphine and twice that evening I used my own needle, unknown to him. The orchestra aboard was excellent and the evening most pleasant.

It was really a sorrow to part from the doctor and his wife at Colombo. Something went with them that took from the journey much of its charm. But the motto I have made mine, "*Et ceci aussi passera*," helped me in that as it has helped me in every crisis of my life, great and small. I have found it to be the only reality.

I felt low-spirited, weak and ill and resorted all too often to the only relief I knew. Maxime found me on deck and took the chair next to mine.

By now I knew of course that he was a drug addict. I had had no difficulty in recognising the tell-tale after-effect which the drug produced—unmistakable to those who know it—and certainly as apparent to him as to me. At first we tried to hide our need one from the other. But he soon found it a nuisance to invent some futile pretext for going off each time he wanted to take the stuff.

"Ma pauvre chère Princesse," he said, "pourquoi nous mentir à nous même? We are done for anyway. We must die either as a result of that atrocious climate that kills you or of this," and taking a syringe out of his

pocket he raised his shirt cuff and tried to find a place which the needle had not already marked.

That journey was a steady progress from bad to worse. I made no effort at control, using the drug whenever I felt its need, without regard for the consequence. Maxime's condition was even more desperate. His devotion tried me beyond endurance. Yet it was not devotion, but a frantic clutching at a fellow-human who satisfied his imagination, who pleased his senses and understood his tastes, between whom and himself, moreover, there was the bond of a common horrible fate. Could congeniality go further? He was sinking and sought a spar with which to save himself.

He fretted continually over the uncertainty of his future. He was weary of wandering about, an exile from Paris. His one desire was to be given a chance to enter his father's business and to show what he could do and he was beset by fears and resentments lest this should not be allowed him. At Brindisi he posted his father an incoherent letter which I tried in vain to persuade him to rewrite. It mingled reproaches and pleas and asked that an answer might be waiting for him when the ship docked at Liverpool.

The answer was there and it told him that his father wished him to stay away another year. I was sorry for the poor boy. Angry and hurt, he said: "You see I am ill, very. I come as you do from a country where we can but die, yet my father does not care and there is not a word from my mother."

"Why not stay in London for a while and find something to keep your mind busy?"

"My mind?" he asked, smiling. "Where is it? What am I, what is left of me, except after using this? And

what am I to them? No, I am going to stay on this boat and go back to Japan. Live or die, I don't care. Nor do you—"

No, I did not care. The drug had reduced me to a state where I was indifferent to all things except being without it. I was sorry, as any one might have been, that he must retrace the long, solitary way to what seemed death. But I could do nothing for him. A strange mentor, I, to be giving good advice about abstaining from drugs. So, with a sadder "adieu" to my sad "au revoir" he put me into my compartment and the moving train broke the spell.

I passed through Paris without stopping and, arriving at Argenteau, was greeted by the news of my father-in-law's death. The dear old gentleman had died suddenly after ailing a little for several weeks. I remember him always gentle, always smiling, always yielding to his wife's fierce will for the sake of quiet. And in spite of the fact that he was a nonentity in his own household, he had been to me its one charming and sympathetic figure.

But Herbert was now the head of the family and my heart leaped with the hope that here perhaps was my chance to regain at least partial control over my son's training—at any rate, to be allowed some voice in it. I knew that my husband disapproved of private tutors as vigorously as he could disapprove of anything that did not directly concern himself. He felt that he had suffered much injury at their hands. His mother, on the contrary, was determined to keep Antoine at home under her eye and since I knew the two—mother and son—were always at daggers drawn, I saw a possibility, now that my once husband had assumed the authority of the

title, that we might join hands over our son's future. That was worth trying for. For that even my morphine needle should take second place.

I had no illusions as to what I was doing. I knew I should have to swallow my pride, that my advances would be misconstrued, that I should be accused of "running after" the duke and that the chance that my olive branch would be accepted in the spirit in which it was offered was slight indeed. But if there was *any* chance—not one in a hundred, but some *part* of a hundredth chance—that I should meet with a response, I was determined to take it. If I could do no more than induce them to send him away to school, my effort would be well repaid.

From Argenteau I wrote to Herbert explaining frankly my motive for writing and asking him for an interview, at which Antoine might be present, to discuss the boy's future.

His reply was curt. He could see no advantage to be gained from a painful meeting and asked that all communications regarding our son be sent in future to his lawyer.

Still I refused to give up, though it was with a hopeless heart that I made my final appeal, since I could only urge upon him more earnestly what I had already pointed out—that our affairs concerned only ourselves and that, as the parents of Antoine, we would do well to consider his future without outside interference, enduring whatever pain the process might entail for his sake. I also told him that I should be in Paris for a few hours between Christmas and the New Year and asked him to arrange that I might see the boy.

To this there was no reply and when I went to Paris at Christmas time I did not succeed in seeing my son.

That put an end to any chance at control over myself or my destiny. Why? For what? For whom? As I saw it, this was an agreeable road to annihilation and the sooner I reached the end of it the better.

The drug did not now, as it had formerly, satisfy a craving for emotional sensation. I had tried that in England with the gay Prince of Wales set and dropped it when I left as easily as one drops winter clothes at the end of winter. It was an *essai* and belonged to the environment in which I found myself. When I changed my environment I changed with as little effort the habits it created. Nor did I seek the drug in later years. But when the doctor used it as a remedy in that country whose climate makes it the only remedy he had to give me stronger doses more frequently repeated than would have been necessary had my system not once been accustomed to it. The dear man planned gradually to reduce the quantities and lengthen the intervals between them and leave the rest to nature. But in my joy at the instant relief, the pleasure and vivifying glow that was the direct result of the hypodermic, I took matters into my own hands. It was so easy there to get all and more than you wanted of it, so pleasant to feel the instant response of the body, the quickening of the faculties, the jerk from lethargy to vitality. The drug acted now, not as a sesame to dreams of sensuous bliss but as a physical tonic. Of course I knew that this too would wear off—that I should have to take larger and larger doses for results that would be less and less apparent. But I shrugged my shoulders. What did it matter? I could get all and more than I needed—more than enough to live and die on.

I returned to Argenteau and oblivion by the route I

had chosen. Gradually all things ceased to exist for me but the comfort of my home, its silence, its solitude and my never-failing supply of drugs. Occasionally I went down for my meals but more often they were brought to me in my room. Occasionally I went out for a drive but more often I stayed at home.

Thus passed a year over which I prefer to draw a veil.

CHAPTER XIX

I Cure Myself

MY mother did not come back to Argenteau at all that spring or summer so I just stayed on. I knew I was doomed and cared not at all.

One May morning when I had slept longer than usual I noticed that the whistle of the speaking tube that went from my bed to my maid's room had dropped from the mouthpiece. Dear Clothilde had died in Brittany during my Oriental travels and I now had an English maid, perfect in that she knew her duties, though I thoroughly disliked her. Reaching to replace the whistle so that I might summon Louise, I heard her voice through the tube and a man's in reply.

"But how much longer?" he was asking.

She answered: "She is so far gone now that if there is no delay in the arrival of the drugs she cannot possibly last much longer. She sees nothing, says nothing, cares about nothing. I have already put away enough to make us both rich. We can leave any day you think best."

"Wait a little longer," said the man's voice which I recognised as that of my butler. "Let us wait until she is gone; by then you will have more and can take still more just after."

I had heard enough. When they began to murmur fond words and kisses were exchanged, I replaced the whistle.

So that was what I was! just that! a helpless rag, a moribund sordid wreck, devoid of dignity, fit for the

contempt of a lackey and a chambermaid! I, the last of a glorious past, of a race of ten centuries of warriors and statesmen! How I loathed myself!

By that time I was holding the syringe in one hand and the bottle in the other. No! They should see. I would show them and myself who and what I was.

I rang, got out of bed and walked to my bathroom. The maid entered with the morning's mail and two packages of drugs that had just arrived. She prepared my bath while I looked over the letters. Presently she said:

"Madame la Princesse has not used any treatment yet this morning"; (to me she always called it "treatment") "but perhaps there is none left. Shall I open these boxes?"

I said: "Surely; yes; open the two."

I took my bath leisurely and she watched me drying myself as a snake watches a bird. When I had finished I took the bottles she had opened and, standing by the bathtub, poured them one after the other into the water as it ran out of the tub and threw the empty bottles out of the window. She opened her eyes as if they would never shut again and from her mouth came a stifled scream:

"Mon Dieu! Elle devient folle! Au secours!"

I caught her arm. "Louise, what do I owe you to date?"

"I do not know—I do not remember—I must see—I will go and look—" She tried to loose my hold, shaking with fright.

"You know," I said grimly. "Name what I owe."

She said about so much. I went to my little private safe and counted out the money to her, adding a month's wages. I told her to pack her things and be gone from the house in one hour.

She tried to speak but I would not hear a word. "You know now that I am still master here. I am interested in nothing else."

By the time she had gone my swift plans were formed. I telephoned to the *régisseur*, telling him to discharge the butler at once and all the rest of the old staff, to see that they left that evening and to engage a new set of servants to be sent down by the morning train. The briskness of my manner and the vigour of my orders caused good old Franchi some astonishment. I could hear the bewilderment in his voice as he answered me. It must be one of two things, either of which seemed fantastic: I had come to my senses or had lost them once and for all. I told him to come and see me as soon as he had carried out my instructions.

I hung up the telephone and the reaction set in. I was giddy and weak. I wanted, I needed, my bracer. If I had not thrown the stuff away, I believe I should have succumbed to the temptation. I spent an hour of agony. I knew that if I rang a doctor would be called and morphine given me to quiet my nerves. And this first step which I had already taken would be to do all over again! And who assured me that I should have the strength to take it a second time? I walked the length of the large rooms, back and forth, back and forth, until I fainted. When I recovered consciousness it was nearly noon and some one was rapping at the door of the little boudoir.

It was Franchi and I directed him to go into the boudoir and wait for me. I looked at my face. I must have been crying. My eyes were swollen and I looked a hundred years old. But washed and powdered and even rouged to show I was myself again, my hair coiled on my head and held by a large comb, a morning dress slipped

on, it was a "me" he had not seen for many weeks who greeted Franchi with a slightly hysterical attempt at gaiety.

He regarded me steadily as I shook hands with him.

"Yes, Franchi," I said, smiling. "You must forget the me of yesterday. I have buried her forever and I do not want you to remind me of her or of what is now the past."

The good old fellow had tears in his eyes as he answered: "Madame la Princesse makes me very happy."

"I count on you. Now what have you accomplished?"

He had secured a cook, housemaids, waiters and stablemen but he had not been able to find a butler nor a lady's maid. He would go on trying. But I had had an idea. And I told him to do nothing until he saw me again.

I knew that they must have removed the breakfast which was always served on the terrace from seven to nine though it had been so long since I had taken note of anything that I did not know how far this custom had been maintained. I told Franchi that I should be down in a few minutes, that I should want poached eggs, chops, tea and toast, that he was to come and have lunch with me on the terrace and order the little piebald pony put into the English trap so that I could go out immediately after lunch; that he was to have all the silver inventoried and locked up and only the travelling service in use; that, in short, all things were to be as they had been before.

I all but pushed him out in my eagerness to have him gone. For I knew that my hold was slipping again. I had barely finished calling to him, "Until presently," and he was still closing the door behind him when I collapsed into a chair, the very chair my father had died in

and, with my head resting on his writing desk, I felt that there was nothing left for me but to die too. I *could* not bear it—either to use the drug or to live without it.

I was so dizzy that I could not exert my will; yet I realised that if I were not there when lunch was served Franchi would come to find me and would send for the doctor. This was my one dread. I knew that a doctor meant the needle: that the professional way was to cure gradually; but, alas, I knew too that I had never been able to do anything gradually but only on the impulse of the moment, to decide and to do, then or never, all or nothing. I believed that if one more needleful of the drug were injected, for whatever reason, I could never again force my will to the pitch necessary to win my fight.

With the perspiration streaming down my face as I struggled to retain my fast slipping consciousness, I caught sight of my father's smelling salts bottle, containing a very powerful stimulant. I reached for it and inhaled it just in time. It was exactly what I needed. After two or three whiffs I grew calmer and when the telephone rang I had recovered sufficiently to answer it and say that I was coming down. I had conquered my second spell. How many more?

I ate my lunch with relish and continued to astonish Franchi. "I am going out for an hour. You are in charge of everything." I had ordered the trap, to be sure, but he had not thought that I should really use it.

I went to the nearby village where old Louis had settled down with the little Belgian wife who had been employed first as scrub girl at Argenteau and had risen to the dignity of being my mother's second maid, leaving

THE AUTHOR AT THE TIME OF HER SUBJECTION TO DRUGS.

ONE OF THE DRAWING ROOMS AT ARGENTEAU.

THE LITTLE PONY, BOBBY, THAT THE PRINCESSE DROVE HERSELF AT ARGENTEAU, AND TWO OF THE MANY DOGS THAT SHE BRED.

her only when she went to Russia. I told them my trouble and Louis said at once:

"We are at your service and will be on duty in an hour."

That was sweet to hear and I was deeply touched. My spirits rose. I enjoyed driving the pretty, spirited pony home though once during the drive I felt the unmistakable craving. The salts pulled me through again.

That evening the servants who had been the witnesses of my degradation left. The new ones arrived the next morning. Louis and Marie were perfect, as always. It was a joy to have her about me, with her practical good sense. My only regret was that I knew I could not take her with me when I left Argenteau. So I asked her to find a girl whom she could train to take her place.

One terrible month I fought there—a fight that no one who has not made it, and made it as radically as I, can really appreciate. But after each crisis that for a time left me spent and weak, a limp bundle of nerves, I grew stronger in body and clearer in mind.

Among a stack of letters, many of which I had never opened, I found several that needed attention. One was from my mother to Franchi, who had sent it to me to read, directing that various pictures, ornaments and pieces of furniture be sent to her in Russia; she would not be back before spring and wanted to have the things around her.

I drove to Liège and saw my bewildered counsel. He could not believe his eyes. On the one occasion when he had come to the château with the experts for the appraisal of its contents, he had seen me as a shadow in the corner of a dim, highly-scented room. Realising my desperate

condition he had never returned to me the power of attorney I had given him when I left for the Orient.

I saw that he was uneasy and that he attributed my apparent improvement to the stimulation produced by an overdose. But as we talked on and discussed my affairs in all their complicated details and I continued rational, he could no longer doubt that I knew quite well what I was about and had recovered, at least temporarily.

He returned to me the power of attorney which I destroyed. I instructed him to ask the court to grant a restraining order forbidding the removal of anything from Argenteau by my mother or her deputies. If she wished to enjoy its treasures, why not come back to them? I arranged to have him bring to me the next evening a statement of the accounts of the estate, of my mother, and of myself for the past two years; went to the bank and got the balance statement from them, to compare with the attorney's figures the next day; saw the *Procureur du Roy* and drove home. Oh, yes. I was completely mistress of myself.

The mail next morning brought me four packages of drugs, a supply for a month of frequently repeated doses. They happened to arrive just as I had come through a particularly fierce struggle and my determination not to yield was strong. Still it was unnecessary to stare temptation in the face, so I cut the strings and threw the bottles one after the other on to the flagstones in front of the entrance. The last one I held tempted—oh, so tempted me! that I had to call on all the will at my command to force my fingers open and let it go. And even as I willed, something deeper and more instinctive in me rose triumphant over my will and I found the bottle clutched more tightly than ever in my hand.

The next thing I knew Marie, Louis and Franchi were with me on the terrace and Doctor Melin from Visé was coming up the steps. My hand was bleeding and there were fragments of glass all about. Franchi spoke to the doctor. I was capable of nothing more than a feeble effort to gain some control over my quivering nerves. Through my half-closed eyes I saw the good old doctor pull out his little syringe and make it ready.

"Allons, Madame la Princesse, nous allons vous restorer," which meant actually, "We will help you." But the use made by the horrible Belgian patois of the word "restore" was all I needed. Pushing away the hand that held the syringe I said emphatically, if weakly: "Not with this, doctor. Never any more with this. I forbid it."

He reasoned with me, syringe in hand. "Once is not a habit. You must have it. You will kill yourself at this rate."

I let him talk. I knew all he could say and how little difference it would make. But I let him talk. It gave me a chance to recover.

Finally I stopped him. "Dear doctor, if you want to do something useful, look after my hand. And put the syringe back in your bag and never bring it for me again. And now come to lunch."

It was fortunate that whenever a crisis was passed my appetite became ravenous.

Taking my hand, the dear doctor said: "C'est admirable."

"Yes," I retorted, laughing. "But it's not your fault that I haven't started down again. Now you know me, don't you?"

"Now I know you," he assented.

After lunch I peacefully smoked a cigarette—not a hashish one—and finished reading my letters. One was from Sir Stanley Claridge's wife suggesting that I join her in Cowes. It seemed to me an excellent idea. A change of scene would do no harm and might be helpful. And off I went the next day.

I made no stay in London, not daring to trust myself yet to the tender mercies of friends nor wishing to enter into explanations. At Cowes I was greeted by Lady Dorchester and hustled on to the yacht with the information that I had come "just in time." In time for what? To see a Frenchman race against an Englishman and lose! If I had known I should have come just too late.

But it was Cowes that set me on the road toward complete recovery. There was enough diversion to keep me busy but not enough to exhaust me. When the hunger for a stimulant shook me I could fling myself into one activity or the other until its sharpness had abated. I ate with appetite and slept well. But I think what helped me most were the long delicious morning swims in the Solent. I went to them eagerly and returned from them vigorous and tingling with health. The attacks grew gradually fewer and when I left Cowes nine weeks later, I knew that I was master of myself.

CHAPTER XX

Spain—My Mother's Return

I HAD written to my son that I should be in Paris for a week and should like to see him as often as possible. I arrived on a Saturday evening and found a line from him saying that he would be with me at six o'clock on Sunday.

But it was no more my son that came in than it was a cloud. I took hold of him, crying like a fool, kissed him and seated him near me on the sofa. Formal, ceremonious, twisting his cane, his hat, his glove in his hand, shifting from one foot to the other, he looked bored to death, had nothing to say for himself and answered my questions as curtly as possible. Presently he began to cast glances at the clock. It was by then a quarter past six.

"Antoine," I said, "what is the matter with you? Are you in a hurry? What made you come so late? What is it?"

"Rien du tout. But I could not come sooner. I went to the races with mon papa."

Ah, that was where they took him. I might have guessed. I said nothing but I stored up a great deal.

"And now," he continued, "I am going to pay a visit with him."

"So you are in a hurry? If you are, then go, child. But when can you come again, to stay to lunch so that we can have a good old time together?"

"Oh, I can't do it. It's my vacation and mon papa takes me to the races every day. Grandmère does not know about it half the time or she would *gueule* at it."

That abominable word whose English equivalent is "to raise a howl"—vulgar, trivial, disrespectful. I kissed him with a sigh and let him go. This visit to his mother bored him to death. But he would come again on Wednesday.

On Wednesday it was a repetition of the scene, except that he talked a little more freely and gave me a more complete insight into his way of life. When I told him that I was leaving Sunday he said he would try to come again on Saturday.

"Don't try, Bobbie," I said. "Come surely."

I was heartsick. This was what they had made of him—a vain, self-satisfied young dandy. I knew that the child had been unfairly dealt with and that my fault, different in kind, was as grievous as theirs. Whatever his original tendencies may have been, we had aggravated his weakness and undermined his strength. No schools, no discipline, no standards; private lessons, races, visits, overindulgence, his own sweet will as guide. It would have been strange if he had developed otherwise.

I went to my old friend, Notaire Pérard. He tried to comfort me. "One month with you would change all that."

"What would be the use? If he *did* change, he would only be the same when he went back to them. I cannot stand it. I know I am in no position to have the verdict reversed but I tell you that I prefer not to see him at all than to see him as he is."

"It is too bad, but don't give up. Speak to him and see if there is not an echo left."

Antoine came on Saturday at six and, though he was no friendlier, I managed to get him to explain how it was he was able to go to the races and be a young man about town at his age, with money to spend as he liked.

"Oh," he answered airily, "it's only a question of knowing how. If papa won't do a thing I want, I go and complain to the old lady and just to spite papa she lets me do it; and it works the other way too. She gives me money so I can have some to give at church. Meanwhile I put it on the horses with mon papa. If I win I give some to the church. If I lose I just tell her I lost the money. I won twenty-five francs to-day with the five francs she gave me. I will give them at mass tomorrow and she will think me a good boy and give me some more. If I don't win, I lose." And those young lips added: "C'est la vie."

In anguish I asked him: "When you lose what happens?"

"Oh," he said, "that's easy. If Grandmère won't give me any, I can always borrow some."

So there it was again, the curse—the terrible, terrible curse! But what was the use of protest or appeal? There was nothing to appeal to. He apparently had no spark of affection for me. I knew that my mother-in-law was not the kind to spare me if she thought that blackening me would tighten her hold on the boy and, though I did not discover until much later *how* black I had been painted, I realised that his hostility was too deep-rooted to be easily broken.

So I only said: "Bobbie, I am going to Marienbad tomorrow for a month. I must arrange about your lessons and then I should like you to come and stay two or three months with me at Argenteau where you were born. But

I must tell you that I want my little boy, not the Paris young scamp you have become. I want you to be with me *l'ouvrier de tes oeuvres*, the builder of your own self. Think it over well. Come to me in that spirit, to work not only at your lessons but at any work that comes your way. If you have, as I intend you to, an automobile, you must be not only your own chauffeur but your own mechanician as well; if you use a launch you must take care of it; if you ride or drive, attend to your things yourself. It will be time enough at seven in the evening to remove all traces of work, dress up and be as elegant as you wish. The one does not detract from the other. It confirms it—"

"It's time for me to go now," he interrupted. "I will think over your sermon—if I remember it at all," and bowing politely, he was gone.

That boy my son? It was incredible. But there it was, and since there was nothing I could do to remedy the situation I preferred not to witness it.

The mail next morning brought me an invitation from the Comtesse De Lannoy at Arcachon to go with her to San Sebastian in the Pyrenees. I thought I should enjoy the trip and hastily changed my plans; instead of going to Bohemia I would visit Spain.

I joined her at Arcachon which was just as I remembered it and which we found so pleasant that we lengthened our stay until we had to rush to San Sebastian to see the last bull fight of the season, graced by the presence of the Spanish king and queen.

The amphitheatre was gorgeous, filled with a lively crowd. I enjoyed the entrance of the Quadrilla, two by two, in their colourful costumes, and the entrance of the matador alone, coming straight from the altar where he

had been praying for protection—bright, dashing, splendid, as he approached the box of the president and made the ceremonial speech asking for the key to the corral. Then he offered his *capa* to the lady whom he wished to honour, the gate of the corral was opened, and the *toro*, standing bewildered for a moment, poor devil, came slowly in.

What followed was to me sheer pain. As the bull grew more and more infuriated by the flaunting of a *capa* on one side and the distracting prods of the *picadors* on the other, as those poor starved skeletons of horses, led blindfolded to their renewed martyrdom, galloped, disembowelled, their organs dropping out of them until they fell dead, the applause grew more deafening and the shrieks from the wild crowd that watched more enraptured.

But neither the graceful rose-trimmed *banderillas* used to enrage the bull, nor the masterly *feintes* of the matador nor his final triumph when he plunged his sword between the bull's shoulder blades amidst the mad acclamations of his admirers—nothing could lessen my horror and disgust at this abominable butchery which they dare to call sport.

I felt so ill when I had seen one of the six events that I begged to be excused from the rest. Sacha too had had enough and we drove to the curious little old town of Fontarabie on the French frontier, before we took a train for Madrid.

The table at our right in the dining car was occupied by four men who were discussing a business deal, speaking partly in French, partly in Spanish. My attention was caught. Money-making schemes always interested me, particularly if there was some element of risk at-

tached. I gathered from what I heard that a tract of land of great value at Alleagallega near Lisbon, covered with a wealth of huge eucalyptus trees, could be bought for a song, but that the purchase must be made within a few days if it was to be made at all. The Spaniards who were in no hurry were trying to induce the Frenchmen to stay for a day or two in Madrid, after which they would all go on to Lisbon together if they decided to make the purchase. The Frenchmen were finally persuaded that a forty-eight hours' stop in Madrid would still give them time to get to Lisbon before the decisive date.

Acting on the impulse which had earned for me my nickname of Whims, I said to Sacha when we returned to our drawing-room: "You see Madrid all you like, my dear. I am going on to Lisbon." A little startled but accustomed to my humours, she agreed and we parted company.

Arriving in Lisbon, I drove to the French consulate. The consul, I was told, was also a land agent. I gave my name as Madame Pierre and asked him if he knew of any land with eucalyptus trees near Lisbon. He named several places but not the one I was looking for. At last I indicated on the map the name of the town in which I was interested. "I should like to locate somewhere near here," I said.

"Oh, but that is a big tract and sold, I believe."

"Pray find out now."

He telephoned and said that there were only four days left for the owner to pay his mortgages. The mortgagees were in constant fear that, if he could not pay, he would burn up the forest before getting out. They wanted only ten thousand francs to cover his obligation.

"But will he sell when he is freed? That is another question. If the property were foreclosed you could buy it at the sale. But there again is the chance of his setting fire to it if he loses it."

I took M. de Surey off bodily to where the man lived. We did not locate him, however, until the next morning, when he decided to sell me the property for fifteen thousand francs. We all three returned to Lisbon and, the money for which I had telegraphed having arrived, I paid him off and had my tract in my possession. If it was worth twenty-five thousand francs to those good business people who expected to reap hundreds of thousands on the trees alone, it was certainly worth ten thousand francs less to me. I gave the consul my right name and left him in charge of the property.

The mood in which I entered on this transaction reminds me of another business deal which was the outcome of an even more unreasoning impulse. One day, while driving through the old part of Paris, something went wrong with my car and I told my chauffeur to attend to it and meet me at the other end of the street ahead of us. The Church of Notre Dame des Victoires, for me full of painful and precious associations, was near at hand and for a few minutes I sought harbour there. On my way to meet the car I stopped before a massive old tenement building in front of which an auction sale was being held. As I came within hearing the auctioneer was crying: "Cinq."

There was no other bid and just as the hammer was coming down, I raised my hand high, crying: "Cinq." Down came the hammer and the auctioneer sent a man for my name.

Good heavens! into what new wasp's nest had I fallen!

"Cent cinq mille et cinq francs. Adjugé à vous. Quel nom?" said the auctioneer's man.

The wasps were buzzing about my ears in good earnest. Here I was without even my bag (it was in the car) and a hundred and five thousand franc house—not to mention my extra five francs—on my hands.

However, it turned out to be an excellent investment. The mortgage was heavy, there was very little actual cash to be paid, and I might reoffer it for sale in a month or less. But I did not have to wait that long. Five days later the man who had bid a hundred and five thousand francs for the house and had missed the final bid because of my inopportune arrival, offered through my attorney to pay an additional five thousand to gain possession. Not a bad return for an accidental bid of five francs.

To return to Lisbon. I stayed there a month and enjoyed it thoroughly. The Cintra gardens are the most exquisitely beautiful I have ever seen, with their gorgeous plants and flowers and their situation high above the town, commanding a view for miles around that takes in the sinuous course of the river Tagus and the ocean. It held me spellbound for hours.

And the city itself was delightful. So enchanted was I with the quaint old mosaic squares of coloured porcelain of which most of the houses were built that I had a great quantity of them shipped to Belgium to make a summer cottage at Argenteau.

I returned there strong, well and sure of myself. Little old Marie had trained Christine to perfection and she was all I could have asked. I had been there for three or four weeks when a court order came, granting permission for the shipment to Russia of some of the articles my mother had asked for, for a limited period and on condition that

they should be sent back safely. I told Franchi to have them crated but not to ship them until I returned. That night I went to Paris to consult a lawyer as to the possibility of having the order revoked.

As I reached the Hotel Ritz a telegram from Russia, retelegraphed from Argenteau, was given to me: "Your mother died yesterday. Body left this morning for Argenteau, Nord express. Signed, C. C."

I went posthaste to her brother, Prince Alphonse de Chimay, and found that he had had the same news, signed by the same person. We hurried to the prefecture of police for passports to Russia and my uncle sent a telegram to the French ambassador in St. Petersburg, asking for official confirmation of my mother's death. I left at once for Argenteau where my uncle was to wire me by what train he would leave Paris so that I might join him at Liège.

The next morning I received a telephone call to say that the news was confirmed but that the body had left only that morning and he had been unable to discover by what train. I kept the telephone and telegraph wires busy trying to locate it but to no avail. After waiting in vain for five days I went on with my uncle to Cologne where a few hours later the death coach arrived at the station.

My glorious mother who so loved all that was pleasing to the eye, in a miserable, bare box, with not a flower, not a drapery, nothing to soften its hideous nakedness! This much, at any rate, I could do for her. During the two hours we had to wait I bought all the cut flowers Cologne possessed and placed them about her coffin, had candles lit and draperies hung. I stayed with my uncle in the coach till we reached Argenteau. We drove from

the station to the chapel in the woods and placed her in its safekeeping. We could not lower the coffin into the vault until the body had been identified and other formalities disposed of.

My uncle and I were present when the coroner came. Oh, the pity of it! The ravages death can make in eleven days! What becomes of the worldly beauty, prized so highly? All the past rose before my eyes, the *calèche*, the extreme severity, the unloved childhood. For the first time, with a prayer, my heart softened towards her and I dared pity her. But even then I felt she resented it.

I closed my eyes on the terrible reality that lay before me and when the coroner mumbled his routine question: "Do you recognise these as the mortal remains of—" I bowed my head and answered: "I do." With the final rites, they were disposed of.

One place in the vault remained: mine. But I do not wish to be laid there.

Of course my mother's death put an end to the wrangle over the Argenteau treasures. The things that were to have gone were put back in their places. In due time her will was read and all the property that was hers to dispose of she gave to her Russian friends, and a further amount that was not hers to the institute of music in St. Petersburg.

The lawyers on both sides said that I could have the will broken because the two hundred thousand francs which she willed to her friends were more than her share to dispose of. But I preferred paying to stirring up more mud and involving myself in any relation with Poswick and the Russians.

I went to Paris and saw my son once more. That was enough. He asked me insolently: "Have you decided

to make me a more tempting offer to come and visit you at Argenteau?"

"Absolutely not," I replied steadily. "And so that you may not forget the actual wording of my sermon, as you call it, I will write it down for you." I did so and he pocketed it with a bow. I suppose he had been with me for seven or eight minutes.

CHAPTER XXI

Wanderings and Winnings

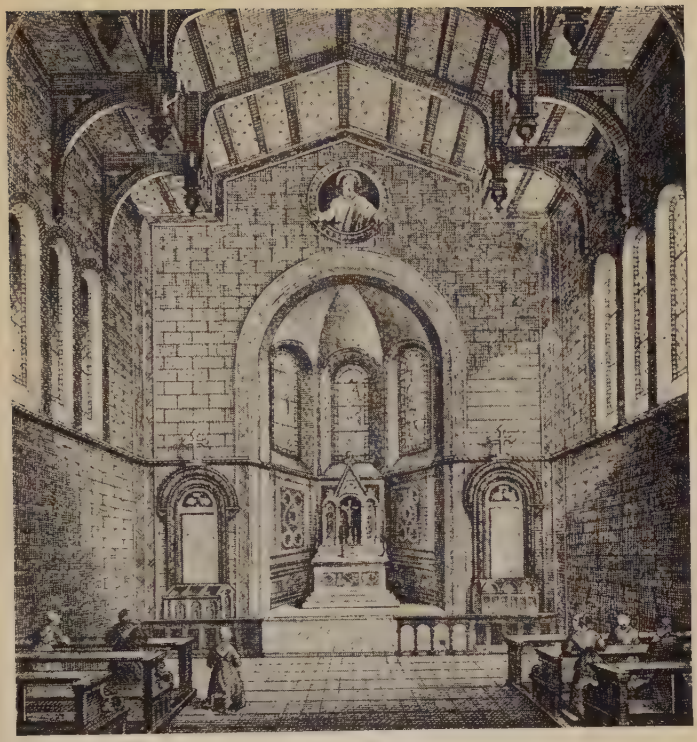
I HAD bought a little house in Paris. I could not endure the villa any longer. A very charming actress was its next owner and—the comedy of life!—Fitz James, as I learned later, was her *amant de cœur*.

It was at this time that I took from Argenteau some of the things that I was particularly fond of so as to have about me something from home. I have several of them still and as fate willed it they are all that remain of those wonderful relics.

How empty the hours were and how I sought to fill them! I could not be quiet for a moment. The thought of my father's legacy to his son in America worried me. Should I go now? But the prospect of months, perhaps years, spent in searching for this unknown man appalled me. Next year would do as well. Meantime I plunged myself into the mad whirl of social engagements.

One thing I did care about—my kennels at Argenteau and in England. Some time previous I had decided that I should like to own a show-dog. Knowing nothing of breeds I went to Hollis, the fancier, and purchased from him Snowflight, the white collie of my dreams. I was assured that he was a perfect specimen, not to be rivalled even by the far-famed white collie of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria. And I saw no reason to doubt it. He was a beauty.

I resolved at once that this marvel must be presented to the worshipping eyes of dog lovers so that he might re-



THE CHAPEL AT ARGENTEAU WHERE THE AUTHOR'S PARENTS ARE BURIED.

EXTERIOR OF THE CHAPEL AT ARGENTEAU.

THE AUTHOR'S MOTHER IN COURT DRESS.

ceive from all the world the tribute that was his due. I knew nothing of the intricacies of dog shows, the division into classes, the conditions of admittance. I had always heard of the Crystal Palace Exhibit as London's important event and I had decided that London should have the honour of crowning Snowflight king of his kind.

I wrote to the secretary for instructions and in due time he sent me an entrance form and a catalogue which named the breeds assembled, each divided into classes for competition. I could not make head nor tail of it—maiden, limit, merle, puppy, open, winners, and so on; and since I could not find it in my heart, in justice to the dog's quality, to choose one or even several of these classes, proudly—generously—so many guineas for each class—I entered him in all. My letter with the entrance form and check left the day before the closing of the lists and I heard no more.

Presently Snow, my maid and I set forth for London and the morning of the first day of the exhibit found us ready to show what a winner looked like. Krehl judged the collies. I did not know him at all at the time. He was a dandy, well-groomed, monocled, silk-hatted, and a connoisseur of all breeds. As the first class was called, each owner took his exhibit, safely chained, and stood in a row, then circled round the judge. Turning slowly on his heels, he surveyed what was presented to him. Then he took one step towards me and, lifting his silk hat in a courteous gesture, motioned me to step "there." I grew several inches and, beaming at Snow, I murmured: "It didn't take him long to see a winner."

The rest of the judging was a weary process as Krehl, with the same courtesy, directed each dog and owner to his place. There were few, *very* few, near where we

stood. At last we were all turned out for a while and the bitches judged. Then came the second class in which we were entered and again we were speedily selected to stand apart. And so on in each class until there came one in which two dogs only figured.

I had reached the ring with Snow when one of the guards, touching his hat and taking the dog's lead, said: "This is the champion class, lady; no dogs allowed around the ring." I could not leave Snow to the man's care so I took him back myself to his place on the bench, wondering what he was talking about and what he meant by a championship class. I knew I had entered him in *all* the classes so why could he not compete in this one? I took it into my head to seek this information from the judge himself and before any one could prevent it I was in the ring with the dog and at Krehl's elbow.

I had got no further than: "Excuse me, sir, but why—" when there was a dash and a lunge and we were in the whirl of a wild dog fight between Snow and the two in the ring. It was a battle royal and the blood gleamed red on my pet's white coat when I finally hastened with him to safety.

As I bent over him and whispered words of comfort and adoration into his ear, Krehl approached. "Princess, will you allow me to introduce myself?"

I flared up at once. "Why could not Snow be in this last class? I had entered him."

"Yes, Your Highness, so you had and in all the other classes."

"And so did he win in all," I said, standing up proudly to assert a self-evident fact.

He smiled and gently shook his head. "He won in none, Princess. Your dog is, I do not doubt, an adorable

animal but—he is as undoubtedly a very poor specimen of a collie."

My hand twitched and if I had not fallen back into my chair I should have disgraced myself and astonished Krehl by letting him feel its impact. He sat down on the bench near Snow and said: "Don't take it too much to heart. If you are interested in collies and want to own a winner, learn how to select one—to understand his points and qualities. I shall be glad to give you the benefit of my knowledge and to send you to some others who have made collies the study of a lifetime."

By that time I had recovered and before we parted I had agreed to study collies before exhibiting them again. But Snow, my defeated champion in the ring, was my heart's champion nevertheless and my constant companion till he died many years later.

And now my dogs filled a large part of my life. Seventeen times in one month I travelled to and from London, bringing back from one trip my prize-winning collie, Old Hall Shamrock, whose first victory was won as a puppy at the Newcastle Show, over Wishaw Clinker, afterwards owned by J. Pierpont Morgan.

Speaking of my dogs reminds me of a far-away incident at Argenteau which made a lasting impression on me. One cold night I had a bright fire in my bedroom and had the supper of my little pet Yorkshire, Pouch, brought to her there. I was in my bathroom when I heard a struggle, a growl and a cry. Rushing to the fireplace, I found Pouch dead, killed by the black and tan collie, Lucy, so that she might eat her dinner. But she did not. I held her while I reached for the bell and had her put into a kennel, a good house with a large run; and for over a year I never went near her nor let her come to me.

One day as I sat on the rock that dominated the river and the winding road to the château, I regretted my long severity and sent for her. She lay down at my feet and as she looked up at me I patted her head. She must have known that she was forgiven and yet, with a fine sensitiveness of which few humans are capable, she must have realised too the lack of complete forgiveness for, running swiftly to the edge of the rock, she jumped over the parapet to her death.

On one of my trips to London I met Maxime again. He had been so ill that he had been unable to stay in the Orient and was living in England. His condition was indescribable but, knowing only too well what he must be suffering, I pitied him. He asked me to supper but was too ill to come down. After this had happened two or three times I went to see him in his apartments and tried to persuade him to take himself in hand.

"How can I if my father won't have me and I am too ill to do anything?"

"Will you do something for me?"

"Yes."

"Then go to Lisbon and give an eye to the doings of De Surey."

I told him about my eucalyptus tract—that I had received a large sum of money from the first cutting of the trees, but that there had been a great many fires since and the property was doomed unless it was properly looked after; that I more than half believed the fires were started after the trees had been cut and carted away and the money turned into other pockets than mine; and that I would give him half of all the returns if he would go to Lisbon as my agent. He was delighted at having something definite to do and accepted the offer at once.

Spring came and with it the desire to pass the Holy Week in Seville; not in a religious spirit—alas, the irony of life!—but out of curiosity to see a *Feria* and the Holy Week ceremonies preceding it.

The Fair was pretty, a Goya in colour and as noisy as any of our own suburban fairs. These cigarette Carmens were adepts in a strange combination of praying and flirting as, every action exaggerated, they knelt on the bare ground with a great play of fans and sidelong glances.

I recall one religious demonstration that was especially strange. Two processions started at opposite ends of the bridge over the Quadalquiver. Neither being willing to abandon precedence of its saint to the other, both advanced. In the middle of the bridge they very seriously deposited their saints and to the accompaniment of the two bands playing their loudest—different tunes, naturally—there was an energetic fist fight for supremacy. The winner, Saint Stephen, then proceeded triumphantly over the scattered remains of his opponent, Saint Paul.

The *Feria* lasted a week, and I stayed three days after it was over, having fallen a captive to the charms of a fascinating dance-hall which I visited every evening in the seclusion of a private *baignoire* next to the stage. The company, thoroughly Spanish, was the most intoxicatingly seductive I have ever watched and there was one girl in particular whose alluring voice and bewitching movements brought the house roaring to its feet. Night after night I returned until I perceived that my painfully acquired control was slipping and that from this point to the fatal hashish was only a half step. I fled to the gardens of the Alcazar where in the society of the Mediterranean and the moon whose appeal was to the

spirit as potently as the dancing girl's had been—otherwise, I recovered some measure of tranquillity.

By pleasant and leisurely stages I travelled through Spain and on my arrival at Marseilles found some interesting letters from Maxime about Alleagallega. He confirmed my suspicions that the fire on the land had not been accidental and that the trees had been sold before the stumps were burned. So much for the consul's guardianship. The place was now prospering, he was delighted with his mission, and we had just had another good financial crop from the sale of another lot of the trees.

Not long after, unluckily for me and in a way for himself, Maxime's grandmother became critically ill so that his mother was authorised to summon him to Paris to see her before she died. He departed posthaste and, once in Paris, he stayed there, which was the end of eucalyptus crop, my interest, his—everything. Several months later when I saw him in Paris and asked him about the power of attorney I had given him for the transaction of the business, he told me that in his haste to leave he had given it to the only man he could think of, M. de Surey. I wrote at once, revoking it, but it was too late. Ill luck in the shape of constant fires had continued to pursue M. de Surey and he had sold the balance of the forest for twelve thousand francs which he was sending me. I received proof later that he had garnered over four hundred thousand francs from his fires, with which he had decamped for Buenos Ayres. But badly as the affair had been mismanaged, after I sold the land my actual profit on that transaction was ten times the purchase price.

An even more satisfactory result of that venture was Maxime's improved condition. Although he was not

completely weaned from the use of drugs he resorted to them less frequently, his manner of life was more normal and his outlook brighter. He told me that if he could get enough backing he was planning to engage in the manufacture of a farinaceous health food, similar to that which had made the fortunes of his father and grandfather. With his knowledge of the business and the application of modern formulas and methods that his father would never agree to, he was confident of success, provided only he could raise sufficient capital to put him on his feet.

This scheme of his interested me and formed another bond between us. Indeed there existed now a very sympathetic understanding based on a similarity of tastes and interests. Love—no. But *bonne camaraderie*—yes. Yet I could not bring myself to accept his urgent pleas of marriage. He was still to some extent at the mercy of the drug habit and he plagued me even now with his jealous teasing for all my attention and favour. Married to him, his exactions would probably gall me beyond endurance. Some day perhaps, for the sake of his companionship, I might be able to bear their yoke. Not now.

My dogs had been winning at all the exhibitions to which I had been taking them—at Frankfort, Brussels, The Hague, Amsterdam, Paris, Lyons, Vienna. Champion Old Hall Beatrice, a black and tan collie, twice won the Collie Club trophy; and in London took the Maharajah gold medal and cup from Lady Alexandra in a close and keen contest. Both dogs were perfect specimens, Beatrice's superiority over Lady Alexandra consisting only in that she ran truer to type.

Many years before I had promised the Russian ambassador to France, Count Kapnitz, to visit Russia some

day and, hearing now of an exhibition to be held in St. Petersburg that year, I decided to take two of my champions, Old Hall Shamrock and Lily Rightaway, to show there. I had the passport which I had obtained when I was expecting to go to Russia at the time of my mother's death re-viséd, and so set forth.

At Wirballen, the frontier, the difference in the regulations and customs of the two countries was at once apparent. Wood took the place of coal, necessitating more frequent stops for replenishing the tender. Wider gauge roads called for more spacious sleepers. At each of the small stations where we stopped, from which no house was ever visible, marched the inevitable Cossack in full uniform and the no less inevitable peacock strutted proudly, a flare of colour against the white background of the snow. Occasionally we passed an indescribable object that was a moujik—filth, rags, hair and beard.

At St. Petersburg my friends at the Embassy had reserved for me a suite of rooms at the Hotel La France. I thought I should suffocate on entering them. Not a window was open, the heat was stifling, I literally could not breathe. When I tried to push one of the windows up I found it was tightly sealed with paper. After a heated argument I finally succeeded in having one little pane, five inches square, opened to let the air in. In the canal below my window I could see ice floating—big blocks of it—in May!

That evening I was to dine at the palace of the Grand Duke Sergius, whose wife was the sister of the Empress. I drove there in a *troika*, those delightful carriages drawn by three horses; the outside horse trots along, apparently only as escort to the two who draw the carriage; the harness glitters and jingles its bells; the fat coachman

puffs on his perch in all the dignity of his uniform and his girth. For the coachman must be fat. If nature has not endowed him with width, he must be padded, padded, padded—for his driver's uniform fits only a fat man. The fatter the driver, the more fashionable the turn-out.

I wore over my low-necked lace dress a big ermine coat that covered me completely. Though the snow lay deep on the ground and the Neva was a solid block of ice across which all the traffic of the city passed and a *troika* is but a little bit of an open sledge, I grew so hot on that long drive that I had to throw my wrap open for relief.

The palace was a fairyland of gorgeousness as were all the Russian palaces I visited. The great beauty of this one was its hall in which all the walls were covered with a mosaic of semi-precious stones, malachites of all shades, jade and lapis lazuli.

I was led by the Grand Duke to a table laden with silver and cut glass and set out with good things to eat—all cold: caviar, sturgeon, smoked salmon, pastes of this or that Russian fabrication, unknown to me; vodka, naturally; champagne. I kept tasting of the delicacies, encouraged by the Grand Duke who urged: "Try this. Try that," until I had had as much as I could manage. Then, offering me his arm, he said: "Now we will go to dinner."

Dinner? Dinner! After eating there for an hour! What kind of constitutions did these people have? I could not eat a thing but I had learned my lesson and, while I remained in Russia, I was careful to remember that after the first meal, standing, comes a second one, seated.

I went back to the hotel in a court coupé and woke in the night to the consequences of my insistence on fresh air: a bad sore throat and my voice completely gone. It

is ridiculous to speak and not to hear a sound but I discovered that in St. Petersburg they are used to that sort of indisposition and have some kind of remedy that "disaphonates" you for a while when you most need to talk; however, it disappears after a few days.

The next day the Dog Show was opened by the Emperor. The Grand Duke Nicholas's *Levriers Russes* or *Slougis* were the sensation of the occasion, but more pleasing to me were a string of white Samoyedes. One of them, the winner, I found at my heels as I was going out; a big, square-headed, bear-like, good-tempered beast, pulling his chain behind him. I led him back to his bench and, inquiring for his owner, found that he was the property of His Imperial Highness, the Grand Duke Nicholas.

When I went back to the show next day I paid a visit to my friend, the big bear-dog, and later at the gate, I found him following me again. The Grand Duke entered while I was making much of his pet and said to me: "You seem to like Moustan very much."

"I would give anything in the world to have him," I answered eagerly. "But I hear none of this breed can be obtained and"—laughing and holding Moustan tightly to me—"I well know that this one is not for sale."

"Oh, surely not for sale," he replied. "But to give anything in the world for him! Is it not a reckless offer? I must think it over." All this with a smile and a drawl so filled with meaning that I hastily dropped the subject and called his attention to my own two collies who had carried off the championship prizes.

I was visited next day by M. le Comte de Vauvineux from the Embassy with a telegram addressed to me and dated two days earlier.

"But why is this being delivered only now?" I asked.

"Just read it."

The telegram read: "Czar dead. What must we do with body. Franchi."

"My poor old dog is dead," I told Vauvineux. "What has it to do with the Embassy?"

"Dog?" he exclaimed. "I thought it was a sorry joke played by some idiot. In Russia, you know, there is only one Czar. Anyway, the police got possession of it and have been at their wit's end to know what to do with it."

I thought it might have been a good idea to come to me with it two days sooner but I wasted no time in superfluous suggestion and speeded Vauvineux on his way to set the minds of the police at rest.

Though my belief in dogma was shattered, I still continued with more or less regularity to worship in the Catholic church. I felt the need of formal prayer to God and of the discipline of formal observance. One day I went to the Cathedral of St. Isaac in St. Petersburg to attend the celebration of the Orthodox Mass and found it one of the most impressive ceremonies I have ever witnessed. It is the custom there, at the moment of consecration and communion, to close the sculptured bronze doors before the altar as a symbol of the unworthiness of sinning mortals to enter into the Divine Presence. As the massive portals swung slowly together, shutting us into outer darkness, a sense of poignant desolation shot through me but, mingled with it, was so overwhelming a realisation of the beauty and majesty and holiness of that from which we were being excluded as to drown all else in a flood of awe and adoration.

I went to the last court ball of the season, following a dinner at which I was seated at the Emperor's right hand.

I had met him in England when he was Czarevitch and he very kindly remembered me. He reminded me of the present king of England when he was Prince George; animated and jolly during those rare moments when he was able to escape from the burden of his crown.

The splendour of the ball with its pageantry and its colourful national costumes of all periods surpassed even the court balls in Vienna. It was a dazzling display of light, jewels, gold, silver—fairy-like, fantastic. I had no jewels with me so I wore a Russian peasant bride's costume, with the natural Kakosnick headdress.

It was at that evening's reception that I bade good-bye to the Grand Duke Nicholas. As he took me to my carriage he asked me by what train I was leaving.

"By the eleven thirty in the morning," I answered.

He promised to visit me in Paris the following spring and, kissing my hand, bade me farewell.

Arriving at the station the next morning I caught sight of one of the Imperial cars and wondered who was going away, thinking it strange that I should have heard nothing of it. I asked for my reserved sleeper and to my astonishment was told that the Grand Duke Nicholas had put his private car at my disposition.

In the drawing-room I found a huge basket made of masses of roses and orchids. I opened it and there emerged the shaggy white head of the adorable Moustan with a card from the Grand Duke tied to his collar. "Moustan is not for sale," it read; "no price could buy him. But it will be a favour to him and me if you will graciously accept him."

I was on my knees beside him, hugging him in my delight, when I heard behind me a drawling voice with which I had become familiar.

"Can I have nothing, if ever so little, of all you bestow on the lucky Moustan?"

I looked up to see the Grand Duke and several of his friends, come to wish me *bon voyage*.

"Remember," he continued, "you once said you would give anything in the world for him. Is it fair to give *all* to him and leave me out in the cold?"

I rose and laughed as I bowed my acknowledgments. "I will hold Moustan my confidant, Monseigneur. Ask him when next your Royal Highness comes to Paris. He may perhaps be willing to share our confidences."

And so my three champions and I journeyed homeward.

CHAPTER XXII

My Boy

ABOUT six weeks after my return from Russia, I went to a dog-show at The Hague with my prize winners—winning again. I drove in my Panhard back to Argenteau, starting in the early morning along the smooth delightful canal-bordered roads that were, however, extremely hot and dusty that day. I arrived at Argenteau at about five in the evening, had the bath and rest to which I had been looking forward during the long journey and at eight o'clock was just beginning my supper on the gallery I have mentioned so often when I heard the front door bell ring. My heart, why I can never tell, cried out: "Antoine!" and, wonder of wonders, it was actually he, my tall handsome boy, standing smiling before me.

"Maman," he said, "I want to be what you said I should be. I have thought days and months and have finally run away from them to ask you to teach me."

I hugged him till he was nearly smothered. Then, drying my eyes, "All right, Bobbie," I said, "you may be sure I will help you."

As we had our supper he told me about his—as it seemed to me—slow comprehension of my despised sermon and how, little by little, it had found its way to his heart and common sense; that, having once realised how much he wanted to be with me, he had schemed constantly

until he found a way. He had left in the night with his bicycle and was on the train before he could be missed. At the last station before the border he had left the train and bicycled across country, taking another train on the Belgian side for Argenteau. He had no clothes but what were on his back and it was indeed a dear prodigal who had returned to my arms. What a glorious evening that was! the happiest I can remember.

The next morning after breakfast we went to Liège to buy what he needed and on my advice he telegraphed to his grandmother to say that he had arrived safely and was with me. When we returned we found his tutor, M. LeRoy, sitting on a bench outside the château. They had realised, when they found Antoine gone, that he must have left for Argenteau, and had sent M. LeRoy by the night train to persuade him to go back.

But at that time he was all mine. Nothing that the tutor could say made any impression on him. I offered to permit him to continue his work with Antoine if he chose; he was sorry, he could do nothing without first consulting Madame la Duchesse.

"All right, consult," I agreed. "But remember that here it is what I say that goes."

That day I wrote a letter to M. Richelle, one of the professors in chief at the Sorbonne in Paris, a man of great intelligence, a power in the educational world and a good friend of mine. I placed the situation before him in all its details and asked him to recommend one of his most trusted, most competent professors—married—who would come to Argenteau to live and train Antoine for his baccalauréat. I commissioned him to sign a contract with the right man on whatever terms he might exact.

Presently there came a letter to M. LeRoy from my mother-in-law, peremptory and indignant, reproaching him with his failure to influence the boy. Another letter to my son said: "Come back at once or I will have the gendarmes get you."

"Can they do that?" he asked me.

"No, but they may ask the Belgian courts for your return and the Belgian courts may uphold the decision of the French courts. If this happens—and indeed I don't see the possibility of any other outcome unless we have a new law suit—we will go to Holland and from there round the world until you are twenty-one.

"But, dear, willing as I am to guard you and fight for you I must know that, at any rate till you pass your baccalauréat, you will stay with me. If you do not feel sure of yourself, of your decision—well, darling, just stay a few days longer, a little holiday, and then go back. It is Tuesday to-day. Think it all over well and tell me Saturday what you have decided."

He kissed me and said: "I give you my word now. Please, Nanny, keep me with you and send off that awful bearded LeRoy."

LeRoy was truly in no way the man to cope with the situation; he was too young, too inexperienced, without weight or balance. Friday brought him another letter from the Duchess which my son showed me later. It said: "Stay with Antoine, if you cannot get him away, and watch your chance to induce him to come with you. Arrange it promptly."

Smiling uneasily LeRoy came to me and said: "I have been instructed to remain. I will start work on Monday."

"My good man, that is very nice but I have decided

HE AUTHOR AND HER SON DURING THEIR TRAVELS
N HOLLAND.

HE AUTHOR CROSSING FROM CALAIS
O DOVER TO ATTEND THE NEWCASTLE
OG SHOW.

ANTOINE, MARQUIS D'AVARAY, AT THE TIME WHEN
HE JOINED HIS MOTHER AT ARGENTEAU.

that you will leave here this very day—by the next train, in fact."

"But you are throwing me out," he protested.

I smiled. "I am only showing you the door and giving you three hours to pass it." Which ended the LeRoy incident.

The next day a letter from M. Richelle told me that one of his most valued professors—a sound scholar as well as an excellent teacher—would undertake my son's education. The remuneration was high but it was a necessary incentive to get him away from Paris and the Sorbonne for that length of time. He was about forty years old and married. M. Richelle did not know his wife but since she was required only to lend the decorum of her presence to the household, her qualifications were of little interest.

I wired to M. Richelle, accepting the terms laid down and wrote to the tutor, asking him and his wife to be at Argenteau on Monday. So the matter was settled and sealed. I had my boy and I was going to do the very best I could by him. Here was something at last that made life worth living.

On Monday they came. The professor was very agreeable, looking younger than his years; but his wife—stout, dark, old-looking—made a disagreeable impression that increased as I learned to know her better. She was vain, an affected *poseuse* and an endless talker about nothings.

After M. Roussel had submitted his program of work, I asked: "And when do I have my share? When may I have the boy with me?"

"Every holiday, Sundays, fifteen days at Christmas, eight at Easter and that is all."

I was glad to have that much and the new régime

began. Religiously I stayed at Argenteau, going nowhere, seeing no one, content in the knowledge that my boy was under the same roof with me, that he had come to me of his own free will and that, together, we might still make something of life. Antoine found the steady grind sufficiently tedious but the hours of recreation, the Sundays, the pony, the goat, the auto, the dogs, the shooting—all weighed in the balance as compensations and he too was content.

We had a glorious vacation at the end of the year, going first to London and then to a collie club dog show at Frankfort, where I showed Moustan and the boy presented Shamrock, winners wherever they went. I promised him a dog of his own for the next exhibition. All this experience was as novel to him as it was welcome, even to the terrific gale we encountered in the Channel on our way to Ostend; as for me, to share his interest and delight doubled mine.

A peaceful happy year passed and in the fall he took his baccalauréat and failed. We returned to Argenteau, to a minimum of holiday and a maximum of hard work.

The following spring the storm which had been brewing broke. The courts of Belgium upheld the decision that, until his guardianship was legally transferred, Antoine must reside with his grandmother. I received this news on a Saturday, together with the information that the official notice would arrive in Monday morning's mail and that if Antoine did not then return to his grandmother of his own accord, he would be forced to go.

On Sunday morning without telling any one of our plans we motored to Holland. From the first town I phoned back to M. Roussel that for reasons of my own I

had decided to leave Belgium and asked him to follow us to the address I gave him.

We settled at a secluded little fishing hamlet just off Scheveningen, the show watering place near The Hague, and stayed there until September. It was a beautiful spot and crowded with happy memories. We showed our dogs at an exhibition at The Hague and much to his delight, Antoine's collie, Star, and his wire-haired fox terrier, Riot, won first prize.

He had a motorcycle on which he took long exploratory trips through the wild country. His keen alert mind and quick wit made his companionship delightful and his charm of manner, when he chose to exercise it, was irresistible. During all this period there was no shadow of misunderstanding between us. He was all friendliness and affection to which I was only too happy to respond.

But the time came to leave Katwyck—Antoine and his tutor to make a second attempt to pass the examinations, Madame Roussel to go to Paris to visit friends and my maid and I to look for a winter home in some mild, warm climate, there to receive the victor or the vanquished.

I passed through Paris on my way South and met Maxime in the Champs Elysées. He looked ill, poor fellow, and his joy at seeing me was as pathetic as it was short-lived. He told me that he had actually started the health food factory of which he had talked to me, that his product had been pronounced sound and saleable and that his only trouble was a lack of capital. He was sure that his father had been using his influence to undermine his, Maxime's, credit.

He then went on to tell me how he had been fighting to cure himself but that he would never succeed without the help of my presence and example. Again he begged

me to marry him and as gently as I could I explained the situation to him, that I belonged entirely to my son and would do nothing to jeopardise my influence with him or his affection for me. He was resentful and bitter and I left him with pity in my heart but unshaken in my purpose.

All through Marseilles, Nice, Monte Carlo and San Remo I hunted agents and villas and found a house at San Raphael that seemed to me perfection. Barely had we settled ourselves than I received word that Antoine had passed his *baccho* and when he arrived in San Raphael a week after my arrival my pride and delight knew no bounds.

The professor's contract was at end but he offered to stay six months longer and I was glad to take advantage of his proposal.

During the Christmas holiday we travelled—Antoine and I—through Italy, to Bologna, Venice, Milan, Rome, Naples. I could not but compare this Italian trip with the two others I had made—one on my honeymoon, one after the disastrous experience with Fitz James. The first had been emptiness, the second tragedy; this was a peace and happiness for which I thanked God every day.

We returned to San Raphael to settle again to work, if in a much more leisurely fashion.

It was not long before I began to notice a change in Antoine's habits. His friendliness with the professor and particularly with the professor's wife increased, and with it there seemed to come a corresponding loss of open-heartedness with me.

I refused at first to see that anything was wrong, chiding myself for oversensitiveness, for lack of perspective, for fancying slights where none were intended. But I

could not keep this comfort long in the face of a steadily growing hostility which each day made more apparent. Every attempt on my part to fathom its cause was rebuffed by the armour of cold courtesy which my son assumed.

To my astonishment I discovered one day in the person of a waiter at a hotel the son of an old friend. He explained to me without embarrassment that he was working in that capacity in order to earn a certain sum of money which he required. In these days such an encounter would be commonplace enough but at that time it was too unusual to escape comment. To me the procedure seemed as admirable as it was extraordinary. For a member of the nobility to go to work to earn money instead of going into debt for it was a phenomenon which first took my breath away and then inspired me with a respect which I found it difficult to keep within bounds. My conversation with our waiter was long and animated.

I was a little chagrined and more than a little amused to learn that I had horrified my son. Amused, that is, until I realised how seriously he regarded my misdemeanour, using it as the starting point for resentful and even insolent remark. His mother in speech with a common waiter in a public place! Disgraceful and shocking! To this day I do not know whether his dignity was really painfully injured or whether he was simply taking advantage of a convenient basis of attack.

At that time I suffered from violent headaches which finally grew so acute as to be intolerable. Electric treatment was my only relief and this necessitated my going to Nice every day. When I was cured and able again to give my attention to what was going on about me I found that Antoine had developed a fondness for walking,

a form of exercise which I always avoided. His motorcycle that had been his great pride he abandoned altogether, and he and the tutor and his wife would go off on long walks together or on fishing expeditions that he had formerly declared were no pleasure.

On Sundays Antoine and I had been in the habit after mass of driving to some nearby village, lunching there and returning home only late in the day. The following Sunday as we were about to start, he said: "Why don't you take the Roussels with us?"

"Don't you think, Bobbie dear," I asked, "that we see enough of them during the week?"

"I do not," was his brief and convincing reply.

That evening we played bézique as usual before he began the half hour of preparation for his work the next day. Finishing early, Antoine proposed a game of dominoes with the other two. On Monday I felt ill and my son considerately excused me from the game, suggesting that there was now nothing to interfere with the round at dominoes.

Upstairs as my maid helped me to undress, she asked: "Does Madame la Princesse ever go down late at night?"

"No. Once I am upstairs I stay here. Why?"

"Oh," she answered thoughtfully, "only a question."

Tuesday and Wednesday passed. Always there was the same eagerness to finish the game with me in order to begin the one with them. Again as she brushed my hair, Titine suggested: "I think it would be as well to go down some night after—after—"

"After what?" I asked impatiently.

But I could get nothing more out of her and, irritated by her air of mystery, I dismissed her prattle from my mind.

The next day passed as usual in an atmosphere as strained and unpleasant as possible. I resolved that, whatever the outcome might be I should have a heart-to-heart talk with Antoine on our next Sunday outing. At nine o'clock I went upstairs. Just before getting into bed I missed my book. Ever since my marriage, not having been permitted to do so before, I have read myself to sleep. Having dismissed Titine, I resigned myself to the necessity of going downstairs to look for it.

With my flashlight to guide me I descended to the drawing room. There my poor eyes were forced again to look upon a sight which, if not a repetition of that searing nightmare scene of years ago, was as cruel and painful.

Antoine became pale as death. I told Madame Roussel to get ready to leave with her husband at dawn.

At six o'clock they appeared. She passed into the garden where, to my dismay, I saw Antoine join her, dressed in a tweed travelling suit and carrying a valise. The tutor came with his bill for the amount due him up to the end of his term. I paid it, took my receipt and without one word watched them move toward the gate, Antoine with them. But my strength was less than I had thought. As he walked on without a backward glance I called to him sharply. He turned and came back, leaving the valise with them.

He was pale and eyed me with such cold resentment and dislike as I could not endure. "What is it?" he said.

I tried to draw him to me. "Antoine," I begged. "Don't look at me like that. Stay with me till this passes over."

"I am going with those I love. I will stay with them wherever they are. If you want me, keep them—if they

will consent to stay after the insult you have put upon them."

I tried to hold him, to hush him, to take him into my arms. "Let me go," he cried and, pushing me roughly away, he ran down the road. I saw him join the others and greet them with a laugh.

Titine found me crushed in a heap under the agony of this last blow.

"Did you know?" I asked. "Was that why you wanted me to go down?"

She bowed her head. "I saw from the garden two weeks ago but did not dare speak. As Madame la Princesse did not go down after what I said I took the reading book into the drawing-room, determined that you should know."

"Good little Titine," I said. "Now forget this and never speak to me of it again."

I wrote to the Duchess, telling her that I had been obliged to discharge the tutor and his wife and that so far as I knew Antoine had gone with them. Then I went to the police department at Nice and asked them to send a man to locate my son and to give him a letter which I had written him.

The officer detailed for the search found them at Marseilles. Antoine was travelling as the nephew of the Roussels. After reading my letter in which I told him that I was ready to receive him if he would come back and that I would wait for him one month in San Raphael, he passed it to the woman who read it and laughed. Then my son tore it up and handed the pieces back to the officer. "That is my answer," he said. "I will do the same thing with any others she may send."

That should have been enough but still there remained

a flicker of hope that he might change. Only when I learned from the officer who followed them to Paris that all three had gone immediately to my mother-in-law's house did that final flicker die.

Painfully I retraced the occurrences of the past months which linked themselves in a chain of evidence that proved to me that all of this had been a cleverly laid and executed scheme of my mother-in-law's to win my son from me. Antoine's strange alienation from me for no cause that I could discover, his equally inexplicable devotion to Madame Roussel to whom heretofore he had paid scant attention—this might have been due to a genuine and spontaneous passion on his part. But that would still leave unsolved the puzzle of the lady's complaisance, of her husband's connivance, of the fact that the Duchess had apparently been their objective from the moment of their departure from San Raphael. It had been after Madame Roussel's last visit to Paris that I had begun to notice the change in Antoine. How simple it must have been for the Duchess to reach her there and to suggest to her the advantages of co-operation between them.

With no further interest in San Raphael I travelled on to Nice and on a visit to Monte Carlo's roulette I met Maxime. He had undergone an operation for appendicitis and still looked very ill indeed.

As briefly as possible I told him what had happened. In spite of his genuine understanding of my grief it was apparent that the soreness of what he called my abandonment of him for Antoine still throbbed.

"So you have awakened from *that* dream," he said. And added, "Will you marry me now?"

"I don't know," I replied slowly. "You must wait a little. I can't get over this quite so quickly."

"But is it no?" he persisted.

"No," I said. "It is not no."

I stayed on at Nice until May and we spent much time together. He had promised me that while I was with him there would be no morphine and he kept his word.

I was very much interested in the business schemes of which he was full. The health food that he was manufacturing was apparently a sterling product, whose excellence and value had been attested by a number of eminent physicians. But he continued to have difficulty in finding capital. When he had wanted money to waste he had always been able to get it—at a steep rate of interest, it is true; but money for his business he seemed unable to raise on any terms. In December he would come into possession of a considerable sum of money, left him by an uncle. His problem was to hold out until then.

Before we left Nice I promised to help him as far as it lay within my power to do so. "Put yourself on your feet," I told him at parting, "and you will not regret it. Win yourself first, me afterwards."

I went back to Belgium. No Antoine, no news, nothing.

Maxime came to see me there two or three times during the summer, and complained constantly of illness and fatigue. And indeed he looked wretched. It finally developed that a small instrument had been overlooked and sewn into him when his appendix had been removed and he had now to submit to another operation.

I was with him all the time he was at the hospital and then accompanied him for a three months' stay in the South. When he was strong enough to take hold of the business again he found it in a sorry condition. He raged

and swore that his father was using his money and power to ruin him.

I calmed him and induced him to explain to me exactly how matters stood. "I can just hold out till payday a week from Saturday. After that there will be no money. But I will *not* sell out. I would rather let it fail."

I thought for a few moments, then asked him: "Will you sell me shares in the business to the amount of the money you need? I will pay you for them within the next five days or at any rate in time to permit you to meet your obligations."

This he consented to do. He sold me shares to the amount of three hundred thousand francs, himself retaining the controlling interest.

With a wealth of samples from the factory I departed for London. The Prince of Wales had the samples tested for me in the hospitals by members of the medical staff of the Boer War, from all of whom I received enthusiastic credentials as to the merits of the food. With these I went to Barnato, the diamond king, and to Sir Ernest Cassel and several others and sold to them the three hundred thousand francs worth of shares that represented my interest in the business. They assured me that any further money that was necessary would be forthcoming on condition that the business should be incorporated and the controlling interest pass into the hands of the backers.

I was sure that Maxime would never consent to this but I agreed to put the proposal before him.

For three months the factory throve. Then I saw that he was worried again. He told me that running expenses were heavy and the cost of advertising tremendous. The business was young and encountered a great deal of hostility cunningly fostered, according to Maxime, by his

father. Orders were not coming in as they should. More advertising was needed to turn the tide and more advertising meant more money. He asked me whether I would let him have my shares back so that he might borrow on them, and take a chance with him on the ultimate result.

Here I thought I saw my opportunity. It was either that or bankruptcy and there was nothing to lose. "If it is money you need," I said, "you can have all you want for the business by forming a company and selling out the controlling interest."

Never have I seen any one in such an insane rage. He jumped up from the table—we were taking coffee—his face white, his eyes blazing. "Company! Never! Controlling partners! Madness!" He stormed and raved until he was completely exhausted and fell panting into his chair.

I saw that no reasoning would move him and that, though failure stared him in the face, he would embrace it rather than yield up his control. With no choice but to do so, I told him that I had sold my shares for the amount I had turned over to him.

He left me without a word and for three days I neither saw him nor heard from him. Late on the third afternoon I had a telephone call from his man servant. He had been carried off to the hospital a couple of days before for a third operation.

When I reached the hospital he was just recovering from the effects of the anæsthetic and could not be seen. That same day the business was declared insolvent.

Later in the evening I went back and was told that no visitors could be admitted until the morning. I drove home in low spirits, troubled and uneasy. As I opened the door of my room, a clock struck eight and a lighted

lamp on the table went out, leaving me in total darkness.

My heart began to pound furiously—why I did not know—and I had to exercise all my control to keep my nerves steady. After I had turned on the light I went to the telephone and called the hospital. I waited long for an answer but finally it came. According to the last report Monsieur Groult was resting comfortably. The delay, the hesitation, a general presentiment of evil filled me with unrest but since there was nothing I could do to dispel it I went to bed.

What happened then may be explained by each according to his beliefs and prejudices. I record only what I know. In the middle of the night I awoke, sobbing, to a vision of Maxime in a corner of the room, his face drenched in tears, gasping, trying to speak though no sound came. I jumped out of bed and called the hospital but could get no reply. By that time it was five o'clock. I telephoned for a carriage and was dressed and ready to go when it arrived.

When the doctor told me that Maxime was dead it seemed to me that I had known it all along. At eight o'clock the night before—when my lamp went out—he had had a sinking spell and for a few moments they thought he was gone. But he was revived and between four and five o'clock he fell into a delirium, gasping, choking, trying to call out, the tears streaming down his face. A few moments later he was dead.

Four: L'HIVER

Four: L'HIVER

CHAPTER XXIII

My Mission

AFTER Maxime's death I faced a blank wall. Had he lived he would have been for me a link with life, something to give it meaning if not fulness. Feeling for him a warm liking and sympathy, and loving no one else, I should have been content to give him of my strength and friendship which he seemed to need and to take his companionship in return, passing the rest of my years with him in peace.

As it was I had again to balance my accounts and take stock of what was left to me. Of Antoine's return I had no hope; there was no other person in the world who meant to me more than a pleasant acquaintanceship. My taste for the gaieties of the *grand monde* had long since turned bitter in my mouth and it was only for the sake of filling empty hours that I continued to bore myself with them. But even this I determined should now come to an end. And not through any lofty motive of sacrifice or self-denial. Ah, no! The vanity of a lifetime was not so easily extinguished.

Always I had felt contempt for the deliberate self-blinding of those actresses who, long past their prime, could not find the strength to quit their public before it quit them. "Why," I asked myself, "must they wait until they become grotesque freaks? Why cannot they depart, smiling, at the height of their glory instead of

lingering on and on until nothing is remembered of them but the wretched decay of those last years?"

And this lesson I took to heart. When I was forty, I should retire in full bloom from *my* stage. This I planned and this I did, content that it should be so and that *la belle Madame d'Avaray* should remain *la belle Madame d'Avaray* to the end of the chapter.

But the years remained. How many I did not know nor care. Only that they had to be filled. Again I thought of the charge which my father had left me. At each crisis of my life it had beckoned and always I had stifled conscience by crying: "To-morrow! To-morrow! Oh, why now? I'll wait till it can be done at leisure. If I begin it now I'll have to hurry back for this or that or something else. To-morrow will be better." And so fifteen years of to-morrows passed and the time seemed at last to have come. Back at Argenteau I examined again the papers my father had given me to help me in tracing his son. It meant America certainly—and I knew not what beyond. It meant a year or several away to find a boy two years younger than I, with only his mother's name and nationality as clues and the name of the town where he had been born.

I sold my Paris house and my kennels in England and France and left Argenteau under Franchi's good care. My plans were made and yet again for a moment I was diverted. I thought of all the people I was leaving behind and wondered if there was one to whom I should like to bid farewell. No, not one. Suddenly I bethought myself of Mlle. Roeland, my old governess, she who had bitten her beautiful nails in penance for their beauty. The thought of her and of the convent made me pause. That cloistered life—might I not find a harbour there?

A gift of great tracts of land made by my mother's

family long years before to an order of Trappist monks had given members of the family the privilege of visiting the cloister and living there the actual life of the nuns and monks. Of this privilege I now decided to take advantage and a very few days found me at the gate of the convent of which my former governess was now Mother Superior. She greeted me with her eyes though she spoke no word.

For three days I lived inside the convent as the nuns lived. It was enough to convince me that here was no solution for me. I could not endure the scraping hard wool clothes next my skin; nor the teacupful of water provided for washing; nor the narrow hard board that was my bed—I fell off it regularly. As I had no divine call, no vocation to make these privations bearable—only a desire for rest and solitude—I decided that I might better combine these with comfort outside the convent.

But beyond and above all this my mission tugged at me.

I left on the third day and sailed that week with my maid and two dogs for America.

I stayed in New York a few days, bewildered at its strange sights and manners. The extremes of the city were to me curious, the magnificence of its hotels, the complexity of its office buildings whose height has always seemed to me fabulous; and then the sordidness of adjacent streets, the elegance of Fifth Avenue and the shabbiness of Seventh and the abomination of Ninth; the condition of many of the pavements that would have shamed the poorest European villages; the humanity that packed the streets between the river and Broadway and suddenly, around a corner, the tall straight beauty of the Singer tower. It was a strange and fascinating phenomenon, this child Colossus rapidly outgrowing its trousers.

I wanted to see the Brooklyn Bridge traffic of which I had heard so much. I did not care which car I took. But with the formal courtesy driven into me by years of habit I allowed so many people to pass and so many trams to go by that a good-natured policeman at last took pity on me and asked me what I was waiting for.

"For all these busy people to pass on so that I can get in."

He laughed a good hearty Irish laugh: "Lor-rd, Lady, it's with fists an' knees ye must push yerself in or ye'll get left each time." He helped me execute this admirable manœuvre and I boarded the very next car.

My most amusing adventures came to pass through my ignorance of American English. In the Equitable Building I asked one of the hall men: "Where is a lift, please?"

"None here, lady. You might find one outside."

"Outside? Why outside?" I thought. "The man is a fool." And going to a newsstand at the other end of the hall, I asked: "Where is the lift, please, sir?"

He looked at me blankly. "What lift?" he asked.

"Lift, lift, lift!" I repeated and then, trying French, "Ascenseur." He shook his head. That ended it. The man thought me a lunatic, I thought him another, and I went my way, giving up the idea of finding a lift in that building. To my delight, in the middle hall I found four of them. I entered one and asked the man who ran it: "Please, sir, what do you call these things?"

"An elevator, lady." Ah, so here in New York lifts were elevators. All right. I put that down in my memorandum book.

Another day, standing next to me in a store I noticed a woman with an exquisitely small round waist, of pretty

proportions and delightful to the eye. Being given to blurting out my thoughts, I said: "Lady, you have indeed an exquisite waist."

She smiled prettily and touched the trimming of her bodice. "You can find one like it at Macy's for two ninety." A bodice then was a waist, part of a gown.

Another expression made an everlasting enemy of a woman whom I liked very much. Speaking of her in her presence to a third person, I said: "Mrs. H. is so delightful—such a homely face." She shook my hand angrily from her shoulder and walked off. Bewildered, I turned to the other lady for an explanation.

"Well," replied my friend candidly, "you ought to have waited till she was gone to say she was homely."

"But she is!" I protested. "She's comfortable, pretty, agreeable, the stay-at-home kind I like."

"Oh!" she replied. "Here the word homely means lacking in good looks." Heavens! I *had* put my foot in it that time. I began to realise how much my education fell short of my needs.

Another story and the last. A woman who was sewing for me complained of her husband and the miseries of her home life. "Such a man!" she sighed. "Always raising Cain."

"Well, there's nothing so wicked about that," I soothed her. "If he's always raising crops that ought to be all right."

"No," she barked in fury, "it's all wrong. Cain! Hell! That's the Cain he raises!" Cane was Hell! This was getting too much for me. Later I had an interest in a large acreage of sugar and Japanese cane, and I never dared mention that crop without carefully prefixing the dangerous word "cane" with "sugar" or "Japanese." Un-

fortunately I never happened to see the word spelled or I should have lost my fear of it much sooner.

Two or three expressions I am only now beginning to get used to. The first time I heard some one say: "I feel elegant" in response to the inquiry: "How are you to-day?" I puzzled over it for days. How could one feel elegant? I soon discovered that it was a locution frowned upon by good usage but "I feel fine," which seems to me almost as absurd, is apparently accepted in all quarters.

At any rate I made up my mind that I must set out to learn a new English, an American English as different from the one I was accustomed to as the Austrian German is different from the language spoken at Berlin or the French of Bordeaux or Marseilles from Parisian French.

From New York I went to Washington, which was an echo of Europe—polished, sophisticated, exquisite. There was a round of teas and dinners and drives with the Embassy people and I met President Roosevelt of the many-toothed smile and his charming daughter, Princess Alice, as we of Europe called her. The White House with its delightful lawns and beautifully kept grounds reminded me of the Trianon.

I stayed in Washington for about three weeks and then departed for Toronto to take up my quest where my clues began. I found there a very old pastor who knew the story and who sent me to Boston where the wife of the minister who had registered the child's birth was then living. From her I heard the tale so far as she knew it.

"Yes, there had been a miserable foreigner—" That was hard to bear and I winced but I had to admit it was justified. "He led her to perdition—" When the girl, blushing, had given him the news of the coming child he had confessed unhappily that he had a wife

living. The girl, not yet seventeen, who must have been a rarely gallant and sensitive spirit, had sent him back to his wife and child. She knew what she would have to endure, knew besides that he was very much in love with her and that she might have exacted who knows what promises from him. But she exacted nothing but the promise to return to his family. "And the one thing he did which added to her misery," continued the old lady, "the crowning insult was that he offered her money."

The foreigner left and one month later she was found in a big reservoir as it was being drained out. There seemed no breath of life in her body but Dr. Echs who attended her fought and won against death and cared for her during the months that elapsed before the birth of her child. She was a sweet, pathetic little soul and so deeply did she grow in the doctor's good heart that after the child was born he claimed her as his bride and gave his name to her son. It was that name that was the key to my search.

The irony of it! I, the legitimate child and heir, was a girl, unwanted, while the longed-for boy was a waif.

I thanked and thanked the little shrivelled-up lady and continued my hunt. They had lived in North Carolina until the doctor died and it was there that I picked up the thread again but not for long. For about ten years the mother had lived there with her two sons but she and one of the sons had died. Which one? They could not tell me. The other boy had gone nobody knew where. I asked what he had been doing when he left and the answer was: "Nothing." Apparently he had led none too reputable a life after his mother died though up to then he had been steady and a devoted son. No message

had ever been received from him and nothing heard of him since he left the town.

I was at a loss. I had no longer the faintest clue and yet I wanted to find this brother of mine, deliver my message and have done with my responsibility. I knew his name and what he had looked like some twenty years before—nothing beyond. To me it seemed a blank wall. But I put advertisements in papers and magazines all over the country and asked consuls and police to continue the search.

Meantime, what was I to do with myself? I drifted back to New York where I met Mr. Morgan who told me that he was showing a string of his Cragston collies and that it would be interesting to enter my undefeated veteran, Champion Old Hall Shamrock, to compete with his champion, Wishaw Clinker. The dogs had met once before at the Newcastle Show in England when they were puppies of nine months.

I agreed to show Shamrock again and again he won the blue ribbon.

At the same show I entered four Chows, among them Champion Trump Card and his son, Chin Chino. Each dog had points that satisfied some pet prejudice of this judge or that and it was amusing at successive shows to wager on which dog would carry away the award. I soon learned to choose my dog for exhibition purposes after first learning who the judge would be.

There was a Chow Club of which I was president and the important Chow fanciers were few—Mrs. Van Heusen, Mrs. Ward, Mrs. Proctor who owned the incomparable Chum. The competition was close and keen. The next show and the last was at Boston. There I was selected to judge the collies so that my Shamrock

was on the bench for exhibition purposes only. I had entered Chin Chino and a string of Samoyedes, which breed by the way was unknown in America until I introduced it.

The collection of Chows was a notable one and Judge Major Taylor was scrupulously careful in his examination of the dogs. He went over each one thoroughly, probing for defects or advantages, and it was only after some indecision that the verdict came on the second day that Chin Chino had won the blue. I made no effort to conceal my elation and the discomfiture of some of the other Chow owners was equally obvious.

One of them approached me charmingly and asked me to join her at luncheon the next day. The specials would be awarded, I reflected, that evening or next morning. Yes, I should be free and delighted to go. Her kennelman appeared as we were talking but she dismissed him quickly, saying: "Not to-day, to-morrow."

Chino accompanied me to the hotel that evening and next morning I took him back to the show, returning to the hotel to prepare for the noon outing. Shortly before noon a note was brought to me. My hostess had been called to New York. I finished dressing, lunched and went back to the show. I did not find Chino on his bench and as I wandered about looking for him, my ear was caught by a low-toned conversation between two people whom I knew slightly. They were eagerly discussing an interesting scandal which had just been brought to light. Dye had been found upon the coat of a dog that had been awarded the ribbon the day before and he had been disqualified. Slowly it began to dawn upon my horrified consciousness that Chino was the hero of this drama.

I hastened to the committee room and was told that

colouring matter heightening the shade of his copper red hair had been found on the dog and that his award had been taken from him.

"But," I clamoured, "*when* was this dye found? He was judged two days ago and that after careful examination and handling. Nothing was found then. Why now?" Silence—complete, polite, hostile. I turned and went out.

Taking my exhibits away I left Boston that evening and, upon arriving in New York, I called upon my hostess of the cancelled luncheon engagement and made my accusation.

"How can you say such a thing? I was not even there."

"You assure me?" I asked.

"I do," was the answer.

I knew that I had not dyed the dog but the fact remained that he had been dyed.

On my attorney's advice I made a statement to the newspapers, naming no names but intimating that Chino had not dyed himself. Feeling herself indicated, the lady whom I suspected brought suit against me for slander. For a year or more the case dragged on with the usual legal delays and wranglings.

Meantime, caring as little for public opinion at this as at any other crisis of my life, I continued to show Chino fearlessly at every show where he could compete against other Chows. He never received the prizes he won, but the little fellow went on winning his right to them just the same.

At the end of a year the final verdict came and I was vindicated. Chino's prizes, awards and medals for ten championships, since and including that won at the

memorable Boston show, were restored to him. I then retired him from competition, as I did my other dogs, tendered my resignation as president of the Chow Club and never exhibited again.

This decision of mine left still more time on my hands. There was no news of any consequence from the detectives and a whim sent me to Canada where I happened to fall in with the younger brother of an old English friend, on his honeymoon with a charming American wife.

With some other acquaintances whom we encountered, among them that same Gregory who had been the boon companion of the Prince of Orange in his days of high revelry, we organised an expedition to visit a crater in a snow-covered mountain several days' journey away. I found the trip tedious; it was too long and the time dragged; when we reached the little inn perched on a high peak near the mountain top we discovered that the roads to the crater were impassable by reason of a heavy snowstorm and that we should have to wait there until it subsided.

Just before we started out one of our party, Miss Hooper, an orphan and quite alone in the world, had turned to me impulsively: "It must be great fun to be a Princess. I should love to try it."

"As for the fun," I replied dryly, "I cannot promise you. But why not try it if you think it would please you? For this trip I will be Miss Hooper and you shall be the Princess." She was delighted. Those in our party called her by the title and the other visitors at the inn naturally followed suit. She was regarded respectfully, there were flutters at her approach and notes were made of what she wore and how much rouge she used. She thoroughly enjoyed herself, as did I, though

I wondered why they should expect one to eat or walk or act differently from any other mortal.

The skies grew heavier and blacker and the trip to the crater was put off from day to day. This was stupid and I proposed that we should return the next day. "Tomorrow," they promised, "if we cannot make it we will go."

It snowed heavily that evening, yet they were all very merry. After supper we played baccarat. The fact that some knew the game and others did not and that we played with white and red beans and round dry peas added to the general hilarity. But as it grew later the fiercely roaring wind rose to a pitch that shook the inn as though it had been a toy house and our game became a mere pretext to steady our nerves. Presently there was a faint far-off rumble and we were suddenly in the midst of such a terrific and magnificent storm as must be experienced to be believed. Built close to the mountaintop the little inn that had weathered many a storm but never a storm like this was at the mercy of the elements. Crash followed deafening crash and the demons of the wind howled wildly about the house. We had long given up the mockery of the baccarat game and some of us went to the window to see what we could see. A white waste through the thickly falling snow, illuminated by livid flashes of lightning. Suddenly the glimpse of a dull red glow in the distance.

"Look! The crater!"

They came crowding about but there was not room for all at the window and several of them went out to the covered porch that hung over an abyss and commanded an unobstructed view of the scene. Gregory, the honeymooners and I remained. In a moment there came

a blinding flash of lightning that lit up all the sky, a peal of thunder I shall never forget and such a confusion of terrified screams from the porch outside that our hearts stopped.

We took one step from the window but only one. Before our petrified gaze the side of the house on which the porch was built disappeared—sunk into the abyss with its human burden! Oh, horrible, horrible!

The snow drifted into the room, crumbling the roof away. We retreated to the far end of the house that was sheltered by the mountainside where we found the cowering caretakers of the place, too panic-struck to know or care what had happened. There we huddled until dawn came to show us what the avalanche had wrought.

The storm subsided and the wind died down and only the snow continued to fall heavily. All that day and night we stayed there and the next day a rescue party came in search of us. There had been nineteen visitors at the inn and after five dead bodies had been dug from the drifts and the toll taken, five were still unaccounted for. Among the missing was little Miss Hooper!—who had died playing Princess.

The papers of course were full of the story. Ten members of a sight-seeing expedition had perished in the avalanche, among them the Belgian Princess. My friend Gregory was for establishing the truth without delay but I bade him wait.

The idea of a final and complete incognito held for me considerable charm. What had I to lose? There was no one to whom my death would mean any sorrow—a hard saying but a true—no one whom I cared to see again. My financial affairs I could arrange so they would not betray me. Society? I was weary to death of the

constant whirl of dollars, dollars, dollars; of the childish display and braggadocio; of the champagne bottles trimmed with gold filigree without and full of bad wine within. But I knew in my heart that for all my peevishness my sick distaste was with myself and not with other people.

Now perhaps fate was giving me a chance—generous fate at last!—to rid me of my old self, to start again in a different place and as a different person a life that might make some show of usefulness.

"I have decided, Gregory," I said, "that it is not wise to oppose destiny. I am dead. You, my friend, will permit me to stay dead. I will slip out of this place to-night and you will tell the few people who may inquire for me that I was killed in the avalanche."

He gazed at me reproachfully as he kissed my hand in farewell but I knew that I could trust him to be silent; and having confided my secret to my young English friend as well I left the town that night.

Again I wandered aimlessly, always on the watch for some anchor that would hold my uneasy spirit fast. With the coming of cold weather I was seized with a desire to sun myself in Cuba and for Cuba I departed.

Havana delighted me. The modern sections, like other new towns all over the world, I found uninteresting, but Calle Obispo and Calle O'Reilly were well worth the long walk I took through them. On my return my attention was caught by the terse "Ask Mr. Foster" which was displayed on every hoarding in town.

"Why not?" I thought. "I have asked every one else. Why omit Mr. Foster?"

So into Mr. Foster's office I went and put my usual question. "Sir, do you happen to know, or have you

ever heard of, any one bearing this name?" and received my usual answer.

But he added that if I would leave a note or return the next morning at nine or ten he would introduce to me a competent man who understood investigations of this kind and went about them very intelligently and carefully.

Neither the next day nor the day after nor the third day did the man appear. "Oh," Mr. Foster explained pleasantly, "he only comes when he feels like it. You see, it's this way. When he has money he drinks; then he gets into such a condition that he doesn't turn up until he needs funds to begin again."

"Oh, I see. And it is to this trustworthy person that one confides the execution of delicate missions."

"Well," Mr. Foster replied reasonably, "if the man whom you are looking for is where he ought to be, the authorities would find him. If he is not to be found by them the man I speak of," indicating the empty office, "is your best chance."

It began to look hopeless. After all, why should I have more success in Cuba than elsewhere? I was turning to go when I heard Mr. Foster call:

"Here is Jones now, coming in. Jones, a lady wants to speak to you."

Jones looked all right. It may have been that hard living had left its mark on his features but he was well-mannered, pleasant if brusque, with good, straight-forward Irish blue eyes. Asking briefly, "What can I do for you, lady?" he led me into his private office, a little room only partly shut off from the information department.

"You can do this. Find for me a man, now about

forty-five, such and such a height and size—when seen weighing so much—last heard of in North Carc twelve years ago. . . ." An involuntary mover from him made me look up from the notes I was reac "Born at. . . ." The expression on his face was a elation.

"Great God, Mr. Jones, you know something of I His name was—is—"

By this time he had recovered himself and, perf calm, said: "I do not know any one of that name."

"But, my dear Mr. Jones, you seem to have recog the birthplace, the town and age when last seen. I c see by your eyes that you knew. Why do you say that you don't know? I must find him. It is a s: mission of reparation that I have been entrusted wit must find him."

He laughed a short, hard laugh. "It seems late i day, doesn't it?"

I caught hold of his arm. "You do know him. V is he?" He realised that he had betrayed himsel had to push my advantage quickly. "Now be a fellow," I pleaded. "Tell me what you know, whe is. Let him be the judge. I am here at my fath at *our* father's—request, to tell him things that I s have told him when my father died. But I followe own way of life and now I have been hunting—"

He interrupted me: "Go on hunting, then, for I to God that you or nobody will ever find—" It thunderclap! The gesture, the tone, the eyes! father had had that very way of narrowing them all but a gleam was lost.

Putting my two hands on his arms, I said: "Yo my brother."

ETAH, SON OF ANTARCTIC BUCK, LEADER OF AMUNDSEN'S SLEDGE TEAM DURING THE SOUTH POLE EXPEDITION.

THE AUTHOR'S HALF BROTHER GIVES ONYX A LIFT WHILE HIS LORDSHIP, SON OF CHAMPION OLD HALL SHAMROCK, CLAMORS FOR ATTENTION.

He jerked my hands off and would have brushed by me had I not stepped in front of him and caught him by the shoulders. "Now, listen. I know you are the man I am looking for. The name is of no consequence. Sit down, listen to me and don't be a fool." And I told him everything that my father had asked me to tell him.

"Oh, all right," he said sullenly when I had finished. "I can always bum the money but I am Jones and Jones only. Sabe?"

"Very well, Jones or whatever you want to call yourself. The money is yours to do as you like with. But won't you spend a little time with me in Cuba before you go away to spend it? You know the country so well that you could be of real service to me if you would."

I tried to keep the great eagerness I felt out of my voice and eyes. I scarcely understood myself why I hung so desperately on his reply.

He would not meet my eyes but mumbled grudgingly after a moment's hesitation: "Well, there's Santiago where I fought during the Spanish-American War. I can show you all through the damned place." He was going pretty strong, my good brother.

We shook hands and I left him. That night at the hotel I pondered long and deeply. I had been moved by this encounter with the taciturn, blue-eyed (eyes unbelievably like my own) stranger who was my brother—my father's son. He was apparently as cynically disillusioned about life as I and taking the quickest and easiest way to lighten its burden; as I had once surrendered myself to drugs in the same spirit. Ah, but I had saved myself from the final degradation. And suddenly the thought that had been hovering all day on the

edge of my brain took shape. Here was my anchor! This was what I had been looking for. I owed him much, this brother, both on our father's account and on my own. If I had found him all those years ago my responsibility would have ended with the transference of the money. Now it seemed to me to be only beginning.

I had once cured myself of the drug habit. Perhaps I could persuade my brother to cure himself of the drink habit.

Put baldly in this fashion, it sounded presumptuous—as if to add to the injury of a long indifference the insult of moral uplift. What right had I to force myself on his privacy with a devotion he did not want and would probably consign to perdition if it were offered to him?

On the other hand, it was plain that he was not happy; that drinking himself to death was not the congenial occupation he would have liked to believe it. We were two bits of driftwood, bound for no port. Why should we not give ourselves direction and travel together for a while? It seemed to me worth trying. After all, it would always be simple enough to acknowledge a mistake and say good-bye.

But I saw that I must proceed cautiously.

The next morning I arranged with the consul for the payment of a sum of money to my brother, to be advanced from my own funds. His own would not be available until we had gone through the necessary legal formalities in New York. I smiled as I thought of my wrecked incognito, so strangely secured, so briefly enjoyed. Long enough, though—I discovered later—to have caused much flurry and agitation (need I say of what nature?) among my relatives and ex-relatives abroad!

It was perfectly plain that Jones would much have

preferred to go straight to New York than to show me Santiago. "But I thought it was decided," I protested plaintively. "In fact, I have already bought the tickets."

"Oh, well," I suppose he reflected, "let her have her way. After all, what difference will a few days more or less make?"

The trip was a pleasure and a revelation. With every day's acquaintance my liking for and interest in Jones increased. Beneath his surface bark he was sound to the core; quiet, unassuming, reserved, understanding; with a fund of experience acquired by contact with human life in every quarter of the globe and a wealth of anecdote, told with a whimsical twinkle of appreciation, that made him the most agreeable of companions. There were occasional eruptions of temper and language but they only added pepper to the dish.

We found much in common and I felt that I was making headway with him. As, little by little, I revealed to him something of what my life had been he warmed to me, though he made no confidences in return. But I think he began to understand my honest regret and desire to make amends. There was besides a strong natural sympathy between us—whether because of the same blood that ran in our veins or because of our isolation or because of a similarity of experience, so different on the surface, which had brought us out at the same point, hardened to the buffets of fate with few desires and fewer illusions. It may have been a combination of all of these things. But there was no doubt that it existed.

We went to New York but we did not stay very long. For one thing, it was abominably cold; for another, my brother had his money and was in burning haste to be rid of it. I had made some few tentative suggestions as

to the desirability of prudent investments and had speculated casually on the advantages of one over another, only to be met by blank unresponsiveness for my pains.

So I decided to make my proposal, flat-footed. I told him that I had been thinking of going to California to spend the winter there before returning to Europe.

"Won't you join me? I should like it above all things."

"What about the dough?" was his prompt protest. "I can't spend it anywhere else as well as here."

"Ah, but that is just the point," I replied. "This is my idea. It is my fancy to buy a winter home in California—some lovely spot with water near where I can spend what remains of my life. You know much about the cultivation of land and are interested in these things—an orange grove, perhaps, or peaches or whatever it is that one raises out there. I should like you to take charge, to supervise it and possibly, if you cared to, to invest some money with mine."

Even as I talked I could feel that I had caught his interest. And as the event proved I was right. Oh, it was not too easy. It required many days, some tact, much discussion. But in his heart the plan pleased him and satisfied some fundamental need of his nature. And this it was which decided him in the end.

CHAPTER XXIV

Conclusion

WE saw many interesting sights in the course of our long journey and, having reached our destination, we hunted in the mountains and along the shores of lakes and rivers for the spot that was to be our future home. Beauty of prospect and surroundings was essential but equally important was the practical aspect of our choice.

There was one place to which my heart went out—peaceful, lovely, on the borders of a wide still lake. Sunset on that lake was an enchantment. After weeks of search and discussion I suggested that we each write on a slip of paper the name of the place that had appealed to us most irresistibly—it reminded me of my marriage lottery—and when we compared notes we found that we had chosen alike. The lake had captured my brother as well as me.

I bought half the land and built my bungalow on it and my brother took the adjoining acreage for cultivation, putting up first a portable three-room hut and later a fine house. Each of us kept to his own abode, but we took our meals together.

And so we lived for several years, our time and interest well occupied with the hazards and uncertainties of the land. We made mistakes as novices will, relying upon advisers who if not actually dishonest were at any rate careless and undependable. Instead of the three or four crops which the land agents assured us we could not help but raise, we raised crops of failures.

Eventually, however, things began to look better. Our first wagonload of watermelons sold in the nearby village for forty cents each. Encouraged and delighted, we carefully packed a carload of the fruit in moss and shipped it to a commission house. When the bill of sale was returned we stood indebted to the transportation company for freight. A splendid investment!

And then some evil genius inspired us to turn to chicken breeding. We installed an elaborate system of incubators, brooder houses, pipes for running water and bought some blue-ribbon Orpingtons together with specially selected Orpington eggs—at such fabulous prices that I half expected the birds to be hatched with gold combs and diamond eyes!

Under the long distance supervision of the Orpington breeder in the East my brother devoted all his patience and energy to those chickens, watching the temperature of the incubators by day and night, coddling the eggs with all the devotion such treasures deserved. The hatches were all that could be desired but after the sixth or seventh day he was kept busy shovelling out dead chickens by the score. We learned too late that the parent stock had been too much inbred with the consequence of low vitality in the eggs; and in the end only sixteen chicks out of three thousand hatched remained to tell the tale of another "sure-fire" investment.

My poor brother cursed the whole outfit to the extent of an always colourful vocabulary and vowed that he had done with chickens forever. But I (with my weakness for blue ribbons) yearned to show the remaining prize Orpingtons at a fair to be held in a large town some half day's journey from our home. He consented only on

condition that the "damned birds" be sold there and not brought back.

At that time all our hopes were centred in a really magnificent nursery of citrus-trees which, though not yet three years old, were already bearing fruit and were to be sold shortly for a substantial price.

We left on a hot sultry day in January and placed our exhibits in their pens that evening. The judging was to have taken place the next day but for some unaccountable cause it was postponed until the following morning. The weather turned cool during the night and the morning brought a terrible, killing frost. We won the blues and left for home. When we arrived we found that every tree in the nursery had been frozen deep down in the ground. Good-bye, crops, hopes, dollars! It meant the end of our agricultural venture.

After months spent in settling our affairs, we decided on a change of scene before making any plans for the future. My brother had been invited by Sir Thomas Lipton (whom he had met under strange circumstances that it is not my privilege to divulge) to be his guest on board the Erin when Shamrock IV raced with the Resolute for the championship cup.

For my part I determined to go back to Belgium, at any rate for a visit, and together we started for New York.

Very little news penetrated to the remote corner of the world in which we had secluded ourselves and we had not seen a paper for three days. At the small junction town where we had to wait for half an hour my brother bought one and on opening it the first words that greeted my eyes were: "Argenteau shelled and burned."

The whole appalling story was there—the outbreak of war, the invasion of Belgium, the shelling of Visé, the frontier town between Belgium and Holland, a stone's throw from Argenteau. Situated on its imposing rock, Argenteau was a vantage point from which the Belgian signal corps directed the fire of the forts at Liège. This manœuvre was soon discovered by the German officers who trained their batteries on it with the result that the château in which I was born was entirely destroyed.

From the station I cabled for official confirmation of the news and received the reply: "Argenteau détruit. Héroiquement defendu." I learned too that my son was a soldier of France. I felt that I could not remain inactive, in peace and quiet. My mission here was ended and a new one summoned me. Had I not, when a child, been given soldiers and guns to teach me to fight? That teaching should stand me in good stead. The battlefield should be the Omega of a life, crowded, it is true—with nothing of much account.

But, alas! like many another I found that duty lay at hand in America rather than in Europe. I could not get into Belgium nor anywhere near the war-ridden territory. There was of course no regatta that year. The Erin became a Red Cross hospital ship and was torpedoed and sunk while on duty in the Mediterranean.

So we returned home and took up the thread of our lives as best we could. And there we have remained ever since. Looking back over the years that mark a half century and more of eventful incident I see one achievement that has been worth while. My brother has been the winner of his fight and I, having fought and conquered in a similar battle, can doubly appreciate his efforts, their result, and the man he has made himself.

AFTERWORD

And thus ends the story of the last of my race. The pity of it! All told, not even a happy life. Though I had everything the world could offer there was lacking one essential of happiness—love—love of parents, love of husband, love of child.

Reared as I had been, a boy to be a soldier, God permitted that most of my battles should be fought alone. I am still as on the field of honour, waiting, alone, however unworthy, ready just the same, awaiting the call.